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THE TRAGIC HERO OF IN SEARCH OF MYSELF

by



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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL, 1972

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled "The Tragic Hero of In Search of Myself" submitted by Linda Helen Offenburger in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

ABSTRACT

This thesis will discuss Frederick Philip Grove's concept of himself as artist and tragic hero by means of a critical examination of his autobiography, In Search of Myself. The first chapter discusses the way in which autobiographers in general, and Grove in particular, develop a persona to represent them in their written reassessment of their lives. Chapter Two deals with Grove's attempt to explain his childhood by presenting significant events in a dramatic and symbolic fashion. In the third chapter, Grove's abstract definition of the tragic hero, as enunciated in his essays and articles, is compared with both the protagonists of his fiction and the persona of himself which he develops during his early manhood. In the fourth chapter, Grove's mature self-concept, as revealed particularly in his autobiography and in his correspondence, is studied. An attempt will be made to show that he did not achieve self-awareness and that the quality of the latter half of the autobiography deteriorates because of the ambiguity surrounding his vision of himself and his society. Finally, the fifth chapter concludes that Grove's autobiography is a failure in critical terms but a valuable and necessary document for any study of his work as a whole.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY AS LITERATURE

Frederick Philip Grove has written: "We don't know what we are; others do. . . . Our real life is the life of a phantom" (Two Generations, 241). His autobiography is a conscious attempt on his part to find and define the phantom which is his own inner being. Towards the end of the work, appropriately titled In Search of Myself, he despairs of ever reaching his goal and says: "I have often doubted whether there is anything which I can legitimately call 'I'" (In Search of Myself, 452). Nevertheless, in this account of his life, undertaken when he was already over sixty, he does present the concept he has of himself, or at least the "self" which he wants others to see.

The fascination inherent in an artist's story of his own life arises because the document often conceals as much as it reveals. In the visual arts, self-portraits and other kinds of works are considered equally valid: thus, Rembrandt's and Van Gogh's portraits of themselves are judged worthy demonstrations of their genius. Despite this precedent, however, literary critics tend to segregate a writer's imaginative creations from his purportedly historical or factual ones. They fail to recognize that

both categories of writing require conscious artistry and control. The discovery of the self is an immensely difficult creative task. Whether or not Grove has succeeded in this quest is largely irrelevant to a consideration of his account of that exploration.

The debate which has recently waged about the validity of Grove's autobiography has concentrated on the verifiable historical "facts" of the work and neglected the demonstrable artistry of this piece of literature. It is the purpose of this thesis to examine the way in which Grove has told the story of his life. Since the truth about that life is not yet, and may indeed never be known, it is often impossible to assess the disparity between his story and his life; nevertheless, the research which several critics, notably Desmond Pacey and Douglas Spettigue, are still pursuing in this area does give new insight into the achievement of the autobiography. Their work should enhance, not destroy an appreciation of that achievement. Dr. Pacey himself has suggested: "I do hope that the detective zeal involved in biographical investigation will not preclude some attention being paid to the critical examination of the work rather than the man."¹ A consideration of Pacey's and Spettigue's work is, then, a necessary preliminary, but only a preliminary, to a study of the autobiography itself.

Desmond Pacey was an early admirer and critic of

Grove. His 1945 volume, Frederick Philip Grove, was the first full-scale critical interpretation of the writer's work up to that point in his career. Since the autobiography was not to be published until 1946, Pacey wrote to Grove himself for biographical information to incorporate into his text and he was allowed to see and use the manuscript of In Search of Myself. Thus, the first two chapters of Pacey's book serve as a preview of the autobiography. In 1946, the critic believed implicitly the information given him by Grove. In the introduction to a 1970 anthology of Grove criticism he ruefully admits however:

It is embarrassing for me to find, in the light of Professor Spettigue's diligent researches, that the names and dates in those [biographical] chapters were dubious at best, completely false at worst. That I accepted Grove's version of his life at face value was probably proof of my naiveté. . . .²

Desmond Pacey was not the only reader to accept unquestioningly Grove's account of his life. For the twenty years which followed the publication of the autobiography, most critical interpretations of Grove's canon were prefaced by biographical remarks whose source was In Search of Myself. As late as 1969, Ronald Sutherland's monograph on Grove introduced the discussion of the writer's fiction with a summary of the man's life. As Sutherland says:

Most of the significant events in Frederick Philip Grove's life are recorded in his engaging, often skilfully written autobiography. In Search of Myself, however, does more than merely record events: . . . it provides a statement of various aspects of Grove's personal philosophy of life,

something carefully concealed from the reader of his novels. Yet familiarity with Grove's attitudes, as well as with the events of his life, is undeniably useful in attempting to apprehend the full significance of his works of fiction.³

A critic aware of Grove's biography can more easily accomplish this apprehension of the significance of his fiction. However, the task involved becomes even more intriguing than Sutherland apparently realized if the claims put forward by Douglas Spettigue can be substantiated.

Well over one-third of Spettigue's study, Frederick Philip Grove, concerns itself with a discussion of Grove's autobiographical works. In addition to examining internal inconsistencies in the actual written documents, Spettigue has also investigated thoroughly, with the help of external resources, every statement of fact made in In Search of Myself. The results of his intensive and extensive research must cause all interpreters of Grove to reconsider the autobiography in the light of his revelations. Spettigue, while admitting that his findings are still incomplete, nevertheless insists that "anyone who seriously examines Grove's life will quickly find himself caught up in a web of inconsistencies that only hint at the complex and skilful concealment and perpetration of a mystery."⁴ After describing his attempts to solve this mystery, he concludes:

One does not therefore challenge A Search for America and In Search of Myself on factual grounds, once they have been acknowledged to be fictions. . . . Whether Grove's vagueness is explained by his never having known those places and people, or by a desire to cover up the tracks he may have made under another identity, it is impossible to say. . . . Perhaps there is a "buried secret" in the

European past, certainly there is in the American past--an education, a marriage, a family, a profession altogether at odds with the published accounts. Yes, these books are "largely fiction," and belong with the recognized fictions as part of the record, seen in fictional terms, of a quest for order, sanity, security, and fulfillment in a dissolving world.⁵

Spettigue's belief that In Search of Myself is not a true account of Grove's life has not caused him to reject the work as a whole. Instead, he has admitted it to the sphere of Grove's fictional canon by his recognition of the quest theme, common to both the novels and the autobiography. Grove undoubtedly does use fictional techniques in the autobiography, and these alone make a study of the work a valuable exercise for anyone interested in his fiction. However, more significant than this, is Grove's obvious attempt, as revealed by Spettigue, to enhance the portrait of himself which emerges from the recounting of the events of his life.

Desmond Pacey, in his most recent remarks on the subject, has decided that although inaccuracies do exist in the autobiography, they are the result of exaggeration rather than invention. He is able to justify this position because in his investigations into Grove's Swedish background, he has discovered an estate remarkably similar to the "Castle Thurow" described in In Search of Myself.⁶ Both Spettigue and Pacey have indicated that they intend to pursue their research in this area and further revelations may be forthcoming. However, the autobiography remains,

and the literary scholar may never know what is fact and what is fiction. A study of Grove's use of fictional techniques in his autobiography may not settle the ongoing debate about his truthfulness, but it will reveal his conscious and controlled artistry in this most personal work and should therefore prove valuable in any consideration of his entire writing career.

Grove himself has commented on the way in which fiction and fact are combined in literature. In a preface to the fourth edition of A Search for America he says:

Every work of so-called imaginative literature, good or bad, is necessarily at once both fact and fiction; and not only in the sense that fiction is mingled with fact. In every single part fact and fiction are inextricably interwoven. . . . The reason for this is that, in imaginative literature, no fact enters as mere fact; a fact as such can be perceived; but, to form subject-matter for art, it must contain its own interpretation; and a fact interpreted, and therefore made capable of being understood, becomes fiction.⁷

Thus, Grove insists that the facts of his life, when interpreted, must of necessity become fiction.

Critics are now beginning to consider autobiography a unique literary genre, and they would agree with Grove's statement, for as Roy Pascal has commented: "these so-called [untruths] are the means by which an autobiography may rise to the distinction of art, embodying poetic as opposed to historical truth."⁸ Henry James made a similar distinction between "right" and "wrong" truths. In the Preface to The Spoils of Poynton he says:

Life being all inclusion and confusion, and art being all

discrimination and selection, the latter in search of the hard latent value with which alone it is concerned sniffs round the mass as instinctively and unerringly as a dog suspicious of some buried bone. . . . Extravagant as the mere statement sounds, one seems accordingly to handle the secret of life in drawing the positive right truth out of the so easy muddle of wrong truths. . . .⁹

The autobiographer, then, must find the "right truth" to explain his own life even if historical truth is thereby distorted. Often, as André Maurois has noted, he presents "a life more in keeping with his desires than his own life has actually been."¹⁰ This commentator continues by saying:

To endow himself with this life, [the autobiographer] will do what the novelist does; he will create it. The only difference between him and the novelist is that as he creates it, he will say, and perhaps even believe, that it is his own, whilst the novelist is conscious of his creative act.¹¹

Not only does an autobiographer create his own life, but he also creates the personality which illuminates that life. The persona which is presented in an autobiography represents either the artist's concept of himself or the "self" he wishes to present to his public. Sometimes the artist, as Maurois points out, is unaware of the inaccuracy of his self-concept. Grove, for example, seems to believe that he found the "self" he sought, whereas a close reading of the autobiography, supplemented by other documents such as his correspondence, reveals that he was not as isolated or as misunderstood as he believed. There appears to be a difference between the persona Grove consciously creates and the self he unconsciously reveals.

Spettigue points out that this process of creating a persona is precisely what occurs in Grove's autobiography:

He dramatized a personality, yes, but he created, in self-defence, the personality he dramatized. He created a "Grove the Man," and for the rest of his life presented faithfully, dramatically, tragically, that creation. Why he needed to do so no one knows, and that is the mystery of Grove.¹²

His method is "to color, elaborate or exaggerate actual events or circumstances to raise them to the level of his fiction."¹³ By employing fictional techniques in his autobiography, Grove is not attempting to make fools of Canadian critics,¹⁴ but merely seeking to present the poetic, the "right" truth about his life.

The fictional techniques used by Grove in his autobiography are various. Contrast is perhaps the most pervasive device, for the entire structure of the book centres around the differences between Grove's early life in Europe and his later career in Canada. However, the central theme of the work is, as Spettigue has already remarked, the artist's "quest for order, sanity, security and fulfillment in a dissolving world."¹⁵ Grove presents his entire life as part of this quest and organizes every facet of his story around this theme. The marked contrast between the European and the American portions of the autobiography emphasize the irony of Grove's later position in the wilderness of Canada where, according to him, his lack of material advantages and of a cultured milieu prevented his voice from being heard.

Contrast is, however, not the only device Grove uses in presenting his autobiography. Life is chaotic and even if its multiplicity is reduced to the description of just one life, it still lacks sufficient order. An artist preparing to write his autobiography, aware of one theme which seems to dominate and explain his life, must select only those experiences from his past which best illustrate this theme. Very often these illustrative events must be made to reveal a great deal about the personality of the artist, about the other people in his life, and about the way in which he reacts to the external world. Events capable of thus encapsulating whole sets of relationships require careful selection, and often must be subtly altered so that they do emphasize what the artist has decided to highlight. John Barret, in an article on the autobiography, suggests that since "a man's life does not contain artistic unity"¹⁶ the artist may, by his altering of events, produce that quality. Roy Pascal believes that the events the autobiographer selects for his work soon become symbols, for the artist's "experiences are isolated, heightened so as each to acquire symbolic value and to be linked in a chain of artistic logic."¹⁷ This task of selecting past events, endowing them with symbolic significance, and linking them together so that they exemplify the pattern the artist has discovered in his life is an immensely difficult creative endeavour.

Grove does use and develop the events of his life in a symbolic manner. There are two ways in which he accomplishes this. In the first place, many of the episodes he describes in his autobiography are similar to occurrences in the lives of the heroes of his fiction. For example, the boat incident in In Search of Myself not only is an echo of Wordsworth's Prelude but also occurs in Grove's short story, "The Boat," and again in an unpublished fragment entitled "The House of Stene." The purpose of the incident is, in each case, similar. In the autobiography, the young Grove's experiences, as a result of his borrowing a boat, cause a great development of self-awareness and personal responsibility. Thus, one incident in his life comes to stand for all the various ways a growing child gradually gains these qualities. However, as Stephen Shapiro has commented: "In life as lived . . . turning points do not appear so carefully marked or so readily detachable from the web of daily experience. Life's long arcs become the sharp angles of literature."¹⁸ Because it is artistically right, Grove does discover symbolic "turning points" in his own life. The boat incident is one of these, as is the later experience with the Kirghiz herdsmen and the encounter with the French priest in the Fargo train station. In first recognizing and then dramatically presenting these turning points, Grove is consciously using a technique common in fiction.

He invests certain events with symbolic significance, allowing them thereby to represent the multiplicity of experience inherent in life.

There is a second way in which events become symbols when incorporated into Grove's autobiography. They are used not only to represent whole phases of his development, but also to crystallize the meaning of the entire work. The plaintive sound of the car horn echoing over the dismal swamps as described in the Prologue introduces the theme which is to unify the autobiography. Grove considers himself, in his position as a writer in the wilderness of Canada, a human equivalent to that car horn. As he says, also in the Prologue, "the tree falling in a forest where there is none to hear, produces no sound" (In Search of Myself, 6). And yet his autobiography describes the life of an artist who continued to create despite frustrations, despite disappointments, and despite the fact that there seemed to be "none to hear." The central symbolic incident of In Search of Myself is Grove's encounter with and reaction to the song of the Kirghiz herdsmen. This event serves as the crisis of the work, for it is at this point that Grove realizes what his goal in life will be. He too will persist with his voice no matter how hostile the reception he meets. The car horn, the falling tree, and the song of the herdsmen are all metaphors for Grove himself. Structurally, these

significant incidents occur at the beginning and in the middle of the autobiography; thus, they balance the working out of the theme they suggest, a working out which occupies the last half of the book. In this way the image of an isolated man whose voice is crying in the wilderness is kept constantly before the reader's eye.

These, then, are some of the techniques which Grove uses in his autobiography. Contrast is a constant feature of his writing: it is used in descriptions of people--for example, contrast emphasizes the differences between his mother and his father and between Mrs. Broegler and Kirsten--and of situations. The most important fictional technique found in the autobiography, and the most significant for a study of Grove's work as a whole, is the method by which he characterizes himself. His own personality, perhaps as a result of his being forced to objectify it, becomes a persona remarkably like the tragic heroes he describes in his essays and presents in his own fiction. Finally, the events of his life are presented dramatically and symbolically so that they reflect the theme of the entire work and the "self" Grove wants to present. Discovering these techniques and studying the way in which Grove uses them in the autobiography allows the reader to approach In Search of Myself with a much greater appreciation of what it represents. It is neither fiction nor fact, but a peculiar blend of both and a true indication of

the quality of Grove's mind and the way in which that mind functioned.

CHAPTER II

CHILDHOOD: EVENTS AS SYMBOLS

A human being, especially in the early, formative period of the awakening soul, is to himself an unexplored continent: and its exploration is, for the individual, of infinitely greater importance than the exploration of any Africa however rich and fabulous it be. (It Needs to be Said, 20)

Grove begins his search for "self" by returning to that "early formative period" of his childhood. His account of the first fourteen years of his life reveals that his was an awakening soul, eager to grasp the significance of its physical and spiritual environment.

Throughout this early portion of the autobiography Grove's method is not merely to narrate his story by describing or summarizing what happened to him, but rather to present dramatically several scenes which allow the reader to accompany the boy on his voyage of exploration. Many of the techniques already discussed in the Introduction are used here. The contrast between his parents and their attitudes to life emphasizes the progressive sense of isolation which the boy develops. The events of his life, when viewed--as they are presented--symbolically, reinforce this impression. These techniques assist in the creation of the persona which will represent Grove through the

remainder of the autobiography.

As a child, Grove appeared to have all of the material comforts he could want, but his emotional environment was not as stable as these might suggest. He reveals that his parents' marriage was not happy, and that he, "the unwanted one, came nine months before that marriage was to break up" (In Search of Myself, 19). During his first fourteen years, while he and his mother still visited his home, "Castle Thurow," regularly, the boy lived in continual fear of his father. Apparently this estrangement between father and son was partially a result of their physical differences. Grove, the eighth and last child, was his father's only son, but he was quite unlike him:

My father was six feet seven inches tall, a personable man, the very devil with women. He rode hard, ate hard, and drank hard. Me he despised. Even at that early age I showed no promise of ever exceeding my present height . . . and I showed a regrettable lack of power to resist infantile diseases: measles, scarlet fever, whooping cough, I caught them all; and I was thin, had a poor appetite, readily caught colds. . . . To be weak or ill was, in my father's eyes, the unpardonable sin. (Ibid., 19-20)

But there was another factor in addition to Grove's physical delicacy which differentiated him from his father. Grove, who says he was most definitely his mother's son (ibid., 23), was more attracted by her artistic inclinations than by his father's more physical pleasures. His mother was a graduate of the Vienna Music Conservatory, and possessed musical talents which her husband did not at all

appreciate. Even while young, Grove was aware of this conflict of sensibilities in his parents. He describes, in In Search of Myself, one evening when he was deeply moved by his mother's performance of the Eroica:

On that occasion, I sneaked out of the room, tears in my eyes, and from the hall, saw my father sitting in a neighbouring drawing-room, playing chess with a full-bosomed, flashing-eyed lady whom he seemed to dominate by sheer physical presence. To him, music was nothing but noise. (Ibid., 27)

To the boy, music obviously meant a great deal, and an incident such as this would cause him to realize how far apart his and his mother's interests were from those of his father. Therefore, during this phase of his life Grove, sensing the estrangement developing between his parents, chose to ally himself with his mother. Later, in his adolescence, an alienation was to develop between mother and son as well, but for the moment, it was his father only who was rejected.

The way in which Grove views the personalities of his parents is remarkably like a similar dichotomy of sensibilities which both Thomas Mann and Goethe claimed to have recognized in their own backgrounds. Grove knew well and admired greatly the works of both these giants of German literature. His notebooks, his articles and addresses, and even his correspondence are sprinkled with references to them.¹ A poem of Goethe's, one which was often quoted by Mann to explain the split in his own personality, might also illustrate the way in which Grove

seems to categorize his parents. The poem reads as follows:

Vom Vater hab' ich die Statur,
Des Lebens erbstes Führen,
Vom Mütterchen die Frohnatur
Und Lust zu fabulieren.²

For Grove does continually emphasize both the differences separating his parents and his own position between them. However, the influence on Grove of Mann, in particular, is much greater than this one similarity might indicate. The setting, the tone, and even the theme of Part One of the autobiography are remarkably reminiscent of Mann's great Bildungsroman, Buddenbrooks, a novel which Grove is known to have read and loved. Buddenbrooks presents the life of of an extremely wealthy bourgeois family living in a north German sea port during the nineteenth century. The theme of the work is the physical, spiritual, and material decline of that family, terminating in the person of young Hanno Buddenbrook, a delicate and sensitive child whose affinities are for his artistic mother rather than his practical father. The resemblances between this work and the "Castle Thurow" portion of the autobiography are obvious. But young Grove reminds the reader less of Hanno Buddenbrook than of Tonio Kröger, the hero of another early work of Mann's. Both Philip Grove and Tonio Kröger survive the dissolution of their families and develop into artists. Indeed, the opinions which Grove later forms on the role of the artist approximate very closely those expressed by

Mann in this novelle. Mann was indeed one of Grove's mentors.

In Search of Myself begins as Grove recounts those childhood experiences he can remember which were to lead to his alienation from his father and his departure from home. The account of this early period in his life is one of the most engrossing sections of the autobiography. Obviously, the recounting of one's earliest memories is a difficult task, for a double selective principle is here involved. The autobiographer must still choose events according to their place in his overall plans but as he moves back in time, his store of memories usually decreases. Any events which he does remember would seem to be significant, yet they must also be relevant to the thematic unity towards which he is striving if they are to warrant inclusion.

Grove handles the problem of describing his infancy and early childhood effortlessly. All of the details he gives fit very well, Spettigue would say too well, into the thematic scheme of his work. For example, in the account of his birth, Grove writes:

I was born prematurely, in a Russian manor-house, while my parents were trying to reach their Swedish home before that event which, at least to me, was to prove of considerable importance. . . . Incredibly, within an hour or so of the event, the hospitable house, belonging to friends of my parents, was struck by lightning and burned to the ground. (In Search of Myself, 15)

Spettigue has commented extensively on this scene and seems

particularly perturbed by the fact of the fire:

That detail (like Macbeth's being 'untimely ripp'd' from his mother's womb, and the portent of Glendower's birth) is too characteristic to be omitted. It is typical of Grove because it defies verification and because it implies a malevolent destiny or touch-of-death upon everything associated with him.³

But the task of an autobiographer is to create an artistic unity out of the manifold facts of his life; and if his theme is to be the working out of a "malevolent destiny" which will separate the artist from other men and prevent the realization of his goals, then he is artistically justified in giving that aura to the circumstances of his birth. An historian could quibble with his account, but a critic should not.

However, lest he be accused of blatant invention (which he is), Grove is careful to justify himself by phrases such as "I was later told" and "I do not exactly remember, of course." He explains that: "I was later, so often and so graphically told about the dramatic occurrence that I find it hard to sift out what I actually saw and felt from what I merely heard in years to come" (In Search of Myself, 16). This is Grove's technique throughout the early section of the book. The text abounds with words and phrases such as "probably," "perhaps," "maybe," and "must have been." On several occasions he admits that his authority for all of the events he chronicles is rather dubious. His nurse, Annette, who constantly told him stories about the manner of his dramatic arrival in the

world, seemed to be a born story-teller with a penchant for exaggeration. His description of her is as follows:

The fact was that, during those years to come, I was in charge of a woman who, at the time, was my mother's maid and who had lived through it all; in contradistinction to my own future experience, the exciting circumstances of my entry into this world had formed the only extraordinary thing that had ever happened to her. . . . What she told me, vividly and in ever-repeated detail, dominated my inner life throughout my early years: it was always started with the words, "Once upon a time there was a little boy." It dominated my life so completely that to this day I cannot distinguish my actual memories from the reflected ones. (Ibid., 16)

Many of Grove's memories in Part One of his autobiography are reflected ones and he constantly reminds his readers of the fact that Annette, his imaginative nurse, is the source of the information he transmits. Thus, he makes comments such as: "If Annette can be trusted, there were twenty-nine rooms in 'Castle Thurow'" (ibid., 21) and "From Annette, who had been with my mother even before her marriage, I heard that there had been an estrangement" (ibid., 32).

Sometimes Grove admits how little he understood of the events transpiring around him. Upon overhearing an argument between his father and his grandfather he remarks honestly "I understood nothing," but then proceeds to expand on what he heard so that his readers may understand what he had not. Thus, he adds: ". . . but I heard enough to know that the older man called the younger 'sir.' While my father did nearly all the talking, my grandfather interrupted him a score of times with monosyllabic but

explosive exclamations" (ibid., 34-35). Similarly, when attempting to describe the details of his life between 1880 and 1888, Grove admits that he is completely unsure about chronology and says that if he were to attempt to organize himself in that way, his account "would necessarily be built on conjecture only, for his memory refuses to tell him where [they] were when" (ibid., 88).

Frequently it is Grove's adult consciousness which has superimposed comprehension on events which the child, Phil, witnessed. For example, when the seven or eight year old boy sees this scene he does not really understand what is happening:

I had to pass the doors of several of the guest-rooms and those of my father's apartment. Just before I passed his bedroom, the door was opened from the inside; and the fine lady came out, in a gorgeous open dressing-gown which showed her silk nightwear underneath. Behind her stood my father, in pajamas, bowing her out. (Ibid., 27-28)

And yet the autobiographer, with adult comprehension, has made the situation both vivid and patently obvious in its revelation of the father's character. Vivid, too, is the reaction of the puzzled but sensitive child:

Neither saw me in that shadowy passage; and I let myself drop to the floor, eclipsing myself between two chairs. I did not fully understand; but . . . I understood enough to . . . [know] I must not mention this to [my mother]. (Ibid., 28)

Thus, the incident is revealing in several ways. It allows the reader to comprehend a great deal about the kind of man Grove's father was, facets of his character to which his son was oblivious at that time. It reveals also the

already sensitive nature of the child who is to develop into an artist. Thirdly, this one brief scene, summoned up from a boy's memory, prepares the reader for the ill feeling which develops between husband and wife and between father and son. Rather than long narrated passages which would outline the gradual emergence of that estrangement, it is here presented visually and compactly. The incident, then, symbolizes a group of relationships and makes them all clear. Additional ironic effect is achieved by the boy's innocent attitude, his desire to protect his mother from he knows not what, and the adults' ignorance of the fact that they are being spied upon.

Many of the events Grove recounts in the Childhood section of his autobiography do achieve this symbolic resonance. For example, the attitudes of father and son to each other are conveyed perfectly when Grove describes how his father abandoned him, a sickly toddler, on the bars of his outdoor gymnasium:

On this occasion, I saw him there and stopped, putting a finger in my mouth, for I was in deadly fear of him. When he saw me, he dropped to the ground and advanced. I turned to flee; but he caught me in his arms and returned to the bar. There, he lifted me high overhead, and I, scared out of my wits, closed my little hands about it. He was still laughing as he let go; but, seeing my distorted face, he grunted with disgust, turned away, and strode off. (Ibid., 29)

The frightened child is discovered by his mother, who catches him as he drops from the high bars. At this point, Grove the artist reflects that: "Strangely, my memory of

the scene--perhaps my earliest direct memory--is not an emotional but a visual one. Whenever I think of it, I see my mother sweeping forward, towards me, in the shape of the winged Victory of Samothrace" (ibid., 29). And yet, if that visual image of his mother is his "earliest direct," as opposed to reflected, memory; his description of the scene above is all the more remarkable, for then the details such as "putting a finger in my mouth," "seeing my distorted face," and "grunted with disgust" become more clearly the results of the artist's visualizing what must or might have been rather than what he actually remembers happening. Grove's emphasis in this account of the experience is on the love and reassurance provided by his mother and not on his fear of his father, although that, too, is an element. The symbolic overtones of this incident are apparent: the child is here abandoned by his powerful father just as the young man will later be stranded in America when his father's death denies him continued financial support.

This incident apparently meant much to Grove, for it appears in two other places in his work. In fact, many features of an unpublished manuscript entitled "The House of Stene" are remarkably similar to the autobiography. Here, for example, is the same gymnasium incident as it appears in Grove's handwritten notebook:

The very first memory of my life, a memory which has been ever present with me through the decades, is one of

fear, and it dates back to a time when I was no more than three years old . . . I suddenly found myself on that gravelled square and opposite a veritable giant at whom I smiled. He lifted me up to a large horizontal iron bar at the height of his head. My chubby little fingers closed around that bar, and the giant smiled at me. Then, slowly, he let go of his hold on my sides, and as I felt myself to be suspended in mid-air, fright seized me, and I started to bawl. A fierce look of dislike and disgust invaded the face in front of mine, and its expression raised my fright into a panic. My bawl redoubled in force, and with a sudden grimace of utter contempt the giant shrugged his shoulders, turned about, and strode away. I bawled, but I held on. The very next moment a white lacey summer dress rushed through the trees and up to me, and a young woman whom I knew as my mother, caught me in her arms and smothered me with kisses and caresses.

That is what I see; that is my earliest memory. The giant was my father. ("The House of Stene," 9)

The variations between this work and the later autobiography⁴ are extremely interesting. In the autobiography, the telling of the event is shortened considerably.

Peripheral details about the father are omitted. Thus, in the autobiography, the "giant" does not smile at his child, nor is he described as gradually loosening his hold on the boy's sides. In "The House of Stene" the child starts to cry as soon as he is suspended from the bar by his smiling father, and it is only then that the man's face is invaded by a "fierce look of dislike and disgust." Also, the reader does not become aware of the fact that the "giant" who is treating the child in this manner is his own father until the final word in the total description of the event. While the statement, "The giant was my father," does have the effect of a surprise ending and of forcing the reader to reconsider all of the above information in the light of

this fact; the withholding of the nature of the relationship until the end of the incident means that some of the symbolic power is lost. In the autobiography, the reader is constantly aware, as the incident develops on the page, that the boy and his father are testing each other's strengths and weaknesses. The father apparently concludes that his son is a weakling and therefore rejects him.

Grove has also incorporated a scene very similar to this into one of his novels. He has stated in In Search of Myself that the patriarchal figure in Two Generations was closely modelled on his own father. In fact, he says explicitly that the relationship between father and son in the novel parallels that between himself and his own father:

But I have, in recent years, tried to imagine to myself how my father would have lived and acted had the chance of birth thrown him into the Ontario of my time; that is, into a Canada where pioneer conditions are just yielding to the urbanization of the countryside: thus I created Ralph Patterson and gave him, among others, one son whom I attached to myself by giving him my middle name. (In Search of Myself, 20)

In that novel, Two Generations, an argument between father and son causes the young Phil to remind Ralph Patterson of what he had once done to the boy:

. . . Do you know what is the first right of every child born into this world? It's to be shown that he's wanted. When did you ever show that you wanted me? From a baby on I've stood in fear of you. When I was only two or three years old you showed me that you despised me because I wasn't as strong or as heavy as other boys of my age. Do you remember how you lifted me to the branch of a tree, as a toddler, and let me hang there by my hands? And when I bawled because I was afraid, you made a face and turned

your back and stalked away, great giant that you were to me? (Two Generations, 195)

The Swedish outdoor gymnasium equipped with horizontal bars has here been transformed into the branches of a tree on an Ontario farm, but the details of the story are remarkably similar. In each of the three accounts the helplessness of the child is emphasized, as is the size and strength of the father. And all three contain the clearly symbolic gesture of the father's literally turning his back on his child and the predicament he has forced upon the youngster--"he grunted with disgust, turned away, and strode off" (In Search of Myself, 29); "the giant shrugged his shoulders, turned about, and strode away" ("The House of Stene," 9); and "you made a face and turned your back and stalked away" (Two Generations, 195).

Desmond Pacey has suggested in a recent journal article that Grove's bitter attitude to the father-son relationship may have been the result of his own illegitimacy. Pacey's discovery in Sweden of an estate which appears to be the original "Castle Thurov" causes him to speculate further:

If the structure and environs of Lödöborg lead me to believe that, in some capacity, Grove knew it well at first-hand, the similarity of Grove's personal appearance to that of people connected with the estate tends to confirm it. Wilhelm af Petersen himself bears a strong resemblance to such pictures as we have of Grove as a young man--both are well over six feet tall, with a thin face, a sharp but well-formed nose, fair hair and blue eyes. In the dining-room on the castle there is a large oil portrait of Sebastian af Petersen who bought the estate in 1917 and who was born in Lödöborg in 1881--and he too

bears a striking similarity to Grove.

These similarities, of course, suggest the possibility that Grove was an illegitimate son of the Sebastian af Petersen (1802-1888) who was the manager of the estate at the time of Grove's supposed birth, or of his son of the same name. This hypothesis is given some limited credibility by the fact that Wilhelm suggests that his grandfather and great-grandfathers had the reputation of being "ladies men" and fond of high life. However, officials at the Landsarkivet in Lund assured me that if Grove was an illegitimate son of Petersen or anyone else, he would be almost impossible to trace.⁵

Father-son relationships are not warm and fulfilling in any of Grove's novels. A secret such as this in his own background might have caused the bitterness Grove reveals in this area and have compelled him to disguise some of the facts of his early life.

Probably the incident which stands out most clearly in the early portion of the autobiography is that in which the twelve-year-old Grove takes a boat for a solitary excursion to a nearby lighthouse. During the course of this adventure and its repercussions, he learns much about personal responsibility and integrity. This particular incident seems in some ways reminiscent of Wordsworth's adventures with a boat in his Prelude. Essentially the same story can also be found in Grove's fragment, "The House of Stene," and in a published short story of his entitled "The Boat." However, there are interesting differences in the three accounts of the same incident. In the autobiography, the child, Phil, has long been fascinated both by the sea and by the lighthouse which he can see across the bay from his home. One day, while on

a "random walk" (In Search of Myself, 36), he decides to borrow a small boat which he discovers on the beach and visit the lighthouse himself. What follows is, for a boy of his age, an exciting and daring adventure. He has to use every ounce of his physical strength to defeat the power of the sea. Grove uses his considerable descriptive talent to present the picture of the boy in the boat on the wild sea as he learns to fend for himself against the forces of nature:

I held southward for perhaps an hour before I turned east. By that time I was clear of the chaos of islets. Before I did turn I rested for a few minutes. Though I was getting very tired, I was still far from the point of exhaustion.

And then, with a supreme effort, I pulled straight east, rowing as hard as I could. I was rewarded, for shortly, by signs which I could not have specified I knew that the water in which I was, was that of the bay. . . . (Ibid., 40)

The sequel to the incident occurs the following day and teaches the boy how to protect himself from evil perpetrated by man. The boat's owner, a Mr. Sterner, appears at his home and claims that his craft was stolen, and if returned, improperly moored, so that it was now lost. He demands of Phil's mother an exorbitant amount of money and threatens to take his complaint to the master, the boy's father. Grove is shocked to see his mother blackmailed in this manner and immediately sets out to recover the lost boat. When his mission is successfully accomplished, he explains what he has done to his mother: "Don't worry over the money for that old fellow. I found his boat. And I got

the inspector to come with me as a witness. I even paid him for having used the thing" (ibid., 52). The concentration, throughout this recounting of the incident, is on the boy and his steadily developing sense of responsibility. He is revealed as strong and shrewd and well able to handle the difficulties which his adventurous spirit creates. His father does not appear in this particular anecdote at all, except as a threat held over the heads of the mother and son. For these reasons, the story dramatically summarizes a significant phase in the boy's development. At twelve, he successfully handles adult responsibility.

In the other two renderings of the same incident Grove's emphasis is much less on the boy himself, though he is still the narrator and the principal actor in the drama, than on the relationships which his adventure reveals. The father is a central factor in the story in both "The House of Stene" and "The Boat." Although the boy still finds and returns the lost boat himself, in both cases it is his father who confronts the boat owner. In "The House of Stene," after the young boy has explained what he has done, his father handles the matter as follows:

There was a strange gleam in my father's eye as he laughed. "The whole thing for nothing?" he said. "Well, Mr. Jupp, it seems you don't have much of a case after all. You will be good enough to wait. I shall send the Inspector down with you so he sees that the boat is there. As for you, young man," he went on, turning to me, "I suppose you have had enough of a lesson already. And since you replaced what you took, you may run along." ("The House of Stene," 29-30)

Obviously, the purpose of the revision affected in In Search of Myself is to have the boy solve the problem independently. The child who was earlier abandoned by his father no longer requires the older man's assistance, and instead of being rescued by his mother, is now able to come to her aid.

In the short story, "The Boat," the incident is concluded in still another fashion. Here, the ending is intended to reveal something about the relationships between all three members of the family. As father and son return together to the hall where the mother awaits them, the father puts his hand on his son's shoulder and praises him. Then:

A strange, happy smile lay on the frail woman's face as she looked up into her husband's eyes. That smile held something I had never seen before: and, strange to say, in spite of my pride a tiny pang plucked at my heart. It was the first time in my life that I knew jealousy, my friend. ("The Boat," 12)

Again, here the emphasis is less on the boy than on his parents, and the father is much more understanding and approachable than he is ever allowed to be in the autobiography. To show the man in too favourable a light would destroy the image of him as a tyrant which Grove has created in other parts of In Search of Myself. He wishes to dramatize his progressive isolation from the man; therefore, these changes have been made.

Another part of the older versions which has been totally eliminated from the autobiography is the symbolism

attached to the lighthouse in both "The House of Stene" and "The Boat." In the latter, the published short story, Grove explains his original motivation for the adventure with the boat as follows:

I knew that a lighthouse stood there, washed by the waves at high water and guarding the rock-strewn entrance to the sanded bay--waving stray vessels back from the danger line and sweeping its finger of light all around in a huge semi-circle. Just when it reached a certain point in the gap where I used to sit, it went out, thus seeming to wink at me in a sort of giant's mocking humour. A moment later it swept around again, to wink once just when I looked straight into its very eye. ("The Boat," 12)

In "The House of Stene" the lighthouse's importance is diminished only slightly:

I had never been there, but I knew that a lighthouse stood there, washed by the waves and guarding the rock-strewn entrance to the bay, waving stray vessels back from the danger line and sweeping its finger of light all around in a huge semi-circle. Just when it reached a certain point in the gap where I use to sit, it went out and seemed to wink at me, till a moment later it swept around again, once more to wink just when I looked straight into its very eye. ("The House of Stene," 22-23)

The only significant change in the two descriptions is the addition in the short story of the phrase "in a sort of giant's mocking humour." It is an effective addition to the story because it brings an almost cosmic dimension to the problems being encountered by the boy. Not only must he prove himself to other people and show himself capable of physical endurance, but he is also faced with the mocking indifference of a metaphysical power beyond his understanding. Significantly, this extra dimension is deleted in the autobiographical rendering of the incident. The boy

asserts his physical and social independence at this point, but his introduction to the power of cosmic forces comes later. The boat incident is one, then, which is a major event in the boy's life. At the same time, this episode acquires symbolic significance in the overall pattern of the life because this is the boy's first encounter with danger and deceit and he proves himself willing to fight for his personal rights.

The final chronicled event in the "Castle Thurow" portion of Grove's childhood occurs soon after this. On this occasion the young boy drives a team of horses to town to pick up a machinery part for his father. The event has a narrative significance because his father's subsequent treatment of him leads to the final break in his parents' relationship and his "exile" from the "Castle." The incident also has a significance in the boy's development as an artist, and this is by far its greatest function. The horses which the boy is driving become frightened by a paper on the road: they bolt and almost run away with him. It is only his recently developed strength and maturity which enable him to regain control and save himself. On his way home he stops:

But when I saw the paper, which had simply flopped over, I stopped, alighted, and ran to pick it up. There was barely a breath of wind; and I wondered at the wickedness of chance which had made the sheets rise at the precise moment when it could do harm. I may have borrowed the expression, but I have come to call that "the malice of the object." (In Search of Myself, 57)

The use of the phrase, "the malice of the object," suggests that the young Grove has now added a cosmic dimension to his personal frame of reference. This concept will become increasingly more important as the autobiography proceeds, because the idea of cosmic indifference in the face of man's struggle on earth is, as will be shown, an important facet of the mature Grove's theory of tragedy. The likening of the blinking lighthouse lamp to a mocking giant's winking eye in the short story, "The Boat," also prefigures this same attitude on Grove's part. However, in this instance, in the account of the bolting horses, the boy encounters directly an apparently malevolent force which overpowers his sense of his own strength and responsibility. When he returns to the family estate, Grove's father can see at a glance that the horses have been running and he assumes that his son has not controlled them properly. Grove describes the catastrophic result of his father's anger as follows:

He asked no question; he did not give me a chance to explain; he simply manoeuvred his horse alongside the democrat, reached over with one powerful hand, gathered my collar into his grip, lifted me bodily from the seat and laid me across his horse's neck, where he began to belabour me with his riding-crop, within sight of two hundred people, grown-ups and children. (Ibid., 58)

This public humiliation of the boy, a humiliation, moreover, which was undeserved, completed the estrangement between father and son. As Grove succinctly remarks: "That was the end of my acquaintance with the man my father had been"

(ibid., 59). Grove had earlier been physically abandoned by his father, but this episode served to alienate them spiritually as well, for, as Grove says: "a proud child's innermost feelings, his very spiritual chastity, as it were, had been outraged" (ibid., 60). Significantly, this incident serves to enhance the boy's character, while completely vilifying the father's. Already, at fourteen years of age, the boy is conscious of his personal dignity and anxious to maintain it. To balance his awareness of the power of external factors such as nature, other men, and "the wickedness of chance," he is developing a strong sense of self. This process becomes accelerated after he and his mother leave "Castle Thurov."

Within a few short years of their departure Grove says that he left his boyhood behind forever. His technique alters somewhat in this next section of the autobiography for he is attempting to represent a transitional phase in his life. Revealing the maturation process by which an adolescent boy becomes an adult is a difficult task. Rather than continuing to present dramatic scenes which reveal essentially static relationships, Grove instead chooses to introduce at this point those themes whose subsequent development will determine the pattern of his life and of his autobiography.

Many of the actual events of Grove's life during this period are the usual initiatory experiences necessary

for healthy human development. Thus, Grove begins to consider what his future career will be; he learns to take responsibility for his own and his mother's welfare when her health fails; he learns to think of his father without hate; he travels all over the world; and he also has his first sexual encounter with a woman. These developments in Grove's life serve as a background for the motifs he introduces here.

The concept of materialism is one which reappears throughout Grove's account of his life: indeed, he believed that the theme of his entire autobiography was the contrast between spiritual and material values.⁶ Because of his wealthy upbringing, he did not realize the importance of money in the conduct of human affairs during his adolescence. When his mother, who knew that her wealth was rapidly disappearing, tried to warn him of the dangers of being a spender, he was confused. He explains his reaction as follows:

It was a new idea to me that money might have to be made, even by such as we. So far, the possession of acquired wealth, in contradistinction to wealth that had been inherited, had been something rather which, in the balance of character, had stood on the debit side. This new view, of the necessity of earning or making money, seemed to imply a complete reversal even in my mother's attitude. (In Search of Myself, 94-95)

Concern about money was gradually to become more important in Grove's life. His disdain for the necessity of acquiring material wealth, however, was to remain with him and to become the basis for one of his major criticisms of

western civilization. The appearance of this motif here foreshadows the coming change in the young man's financial position.

The second important theme which is established at this point in the autobiography is that of Grove's cosmopolitan background. This word, "cosmopolitan," is the precise one which Grove uses to describe the way in which his personality developed during his adolescent years in Europe (*ibid.*, 88). He is to use the word again, much later in the autobiography, in order to explain his attitude to the North American wilderness and to the race of people he finds there. Here, its use is significant because it reveals much about Grove's attitude towards himself. Already he is beginning to consider himself a person apart from the rest of humanity, and that attitude will develop.

Even before he and his mother left "Castle Thurov," they had been accustomed to spending a great proportion of their time in the cultural centres of Europe. The separation of Grove's parents meant only that the Swedish summer vacations were eliminated from their itinerary.

Grove tries to describe how influential those years were:

Now, though when we were abroad, there was never anything which could be called a home atmosphere, there was a very distinct and striking intellectual atmosphere in the circles which gathered round my mother; and that atmosphere had a profound and persistent influence on me and my whole development to come. (*Ibid.*, 82)

The difference between this atmosphere and that which Grove

later found in Canada makes some of his bitter remarks about the cultural scene in his adopted homeland more understandable. Also, these references to the rich intellectual framework of his background, like those to his family's great material wealth, serve to heighten the contrast between his years in Europe and in North America. His fall from fortune thus becomes more dramatic and awe-inspiring if only because the distance he fell was so great. Having established these themes and having brought his own "self" to the threshold of his adult life, Grove can now endow his personality with the traits he believed characterized him. Now the persona of Frederick Philip Grove can be presented.

CHAPTER III

EARLY MANHOOD: THE CREATION OF A PERSONA

When writing of the years of his early manhood Grove consciously presents himself as a tragic hero although this interpretation of his character is suggested even in the earliest parts of the autobiography. He has already established his wealthy, cultured background and his sensitive, independent character. What remains is to infuse into this personality a strong sense of purpose, without which his titanic struggle on this earth (to be described later) would be meaningless.

Grove begins to sense his mission in life when, after his mother's death, he accompanies his great-uncle on a scientific expedition to Russia. While in the Siberian steppes Grove hears for the first time the song of the Kirghiz herdsmen, and this experience has the impact of a Joycean epiphany¹ upon him:

And then, in the dark of the evening, we overtook a travelling clan of these Kirghiz herdsmen. . . . But, when we had left them a quarter of a mile behind, suddenly, unexpectedly, almost startlingly, the whole column broke into a droning sound, with the effect of a ghostly unreality. It was a vast, melancholy utterance, cadenced within a few octaves of the bass register, as if the landscape as such had assumed a voice: full of an almost inarticulate realization of man's forlorn position in the face of a hostile barrenness of nature; and yet full, also, of a

stubborn, if perhaps only inchoate assertion of man's dignity below his god. (In Search of Myself, 153)

This is the objective experience with which the seventeen-year-old Grove is then confronted. He next describes the effect of the experience upon him:

A revelation came to me. All these humans--for, incredibly, like myself, they were human--represented mere wavelets on the stream of a seminal, germinal life which flowed through them, which had propagated itself, for millennia, through them, almost without, perhaps even against, their will and desire. They had done what they must do; and from their doings life had sprung. No doubt each single one of them felt himself to be an individual; to me, lack of personal, distinguishing contact made them appear as mere representatives of their race. But their song was eternal because, out of the stream and succession of generations, somewhere, somewhen, a nameless individual had arisen to give them a voice. That voice was the important thing to me; for already I felt that I, too, was to be a voice; and I, too, was perfectly willing to remain nameless. (Ibid., 153-154)

Until this point in his life the young Grove has not discovered precisely what his destiny is to be. He does have vaguely intellectual aspirations and later in the autobiography he mentions that he had started to write while still a schoolboy in Hamburg.² He had earlier formed a violent dislike for his mother's plan of making a practical man of him and had stated then: "already the desire had sprung up in me to be one day counted among the great poets or writers" (ibid., 96). Now, that desire becomes intensified as his mission defines itself more clearly. Hearing the voice of the Kirghiz herdsmen convinces him that he, too, wants to be a voice who, as an individual, can step out of the stream and succession of

generations and represent the masses of his fellow men. Self-awareness of what his ultimate destiny will be begins here.

For the next three years Grove continued to live much as he had before this experience. He does say, though, that his attitude to what he was doing had changed, for:

Never again, after Paris, could I see my aim in life in anything but the ultimate working out of what was in me: a sort of reaction to the universe in which man was trapped, defending himself on all fronts against a cosmic attack. (Ibid., 162-163)

But before he begins working out this defence against cosmic attack, Grove travelled around the world visiting every continent except America. By studying in Paris, Rome, and then Munich, he was able to absorb the best which European culture offered. Aware, perhaps, that his activities did not always mirror dedication to his vocation, the authorial voice of the autobiographer Grove intrudes to comment:

Already I saw that eccentricity or extravagance in the conduct of life invariably accompanied only the lesser talent; the greater talent soon cut itself loose: work meant more to it than dissipation; I too, was, of course, going to cut myself loose pretty soon. (Ibid., 164)

This period in Grove's youth is very like a stage in the development of Mann's Tonio Kröger, who also experienced an interlude of sensuality.³ Grove never did cut himself loose from this cultivation of his mind and soul in European culture: he was, rather, cut loose from it by the

sudden death of his father and the revelation that the family estate was bankrupt. At the time of this catastrophe, Grove was just twenty and was travelling in Canada.

The entire structure of the autobiography is built upon this dramatic reversal of fortune in Grove's life. Such a reversal obviously allows an ironic interpretation because the hero's European experiences contrast so sharply with his American ones. Spettigue comments on this reversal by saying:

. . . contrast, for ironic effect, is an organizing principle of In Search of Myself and of much of Grove's art. The irony, in turn, is often employed tragically--Grove presents himself as a sort of Oedipus figure exalted by the gods in his youth in order that they might strike him down in his age.⁴

Grove is transformed from a young man who enjoys every advantage which position wealth and intelligence can bestow into a hobo who must struggle to provide himself with the basic necessities of life. Twenty years spent in the lap of luxury are succeeded by twenty years of poverty. An education in the culture of Europe proves to be a poor preparation for the struggle to survive in an unfamiliar land.

Not only do the circumstances of Grove's life radically rearrange themselves in this new setting, but the tone of the autobiography also changes quite noticeably at this point. Grove is no longer among people whom he can consider his equals, and when his material advantages have disappeared, he finds he must even disguise his

intellectual superiority in order to survive. The bitterness he has earlier felt at his father's treatment of him is aggravated when it seems as if fate itself is now conspiring against him. Grove explains that he felt himself to be "an exile from his youth and its promise" (ibid., 236) and he describes the plight of the cultured immigrant in the wilderness as follows:

I felt an exile. I was an exile. I did not live among people of my own kind; among people who, metaphorically, spoke my language; among people who respected my fierce sensibilities; among people who shared a single one of my interests. The only sort of what, with a stretch of the imagination, could be called literary art with which I ever came into living contact, consisted of the "tall" tales of the west; and they stood in flagrant contradiction to the squalid reality I saw all about.

I wanted to be in touch with the finest and the highest thought of the age. Instead, I was being rubbed the wrong way, day in, day out, by those who, for the moment, were my social equals--whom others would have called the scum of the earth; the people who, like myself, were crowded over the edge and into the abyss. An economic absurdity had banished me to a new Siberia. I wanted to take decent clothes for granted; I wanted to have a daily bath in something larger than a saucepan; I wanted economic continuity and security, so that I should never again have to look upon a steadily-decreasing store of savings as my only defence against actual want in a hostile winter climate.

Above all, I wanted to write. I had things to say. (Ibid., 235-236)

The most striking characteristic of the tone of this passage is Grove's indignation at the injustice of his position. To be forced to consider people he would ordinarily term "the scum of the earth" as his social equals must have been painful indeed for a man of his "fierce sensibilities." Now he, more than ever, felt isolated from those around him. His attitude to financial matters

is evidently still one of disdain, for he calls it an "economic absurdity" that his wealth has vanished, depriving him of the opportunities he considers his birthright. Grove appears also to have inherited from his childhood nurse, Annette, the habit of exaggerating circumstances; thus, he is not merely living in North America, but has been "banished . . . to a new Siberia." He is now beginning to interpret his life as a tragedy, and although his tone here is perilously close to self-pity, his sense of his mission remains as strong as ever.

Grove says that even when he first arrived in America he wanted to write. Later, he came to believe that he had not then been ready to produce anything worthwhile. As he says in the autobiography:

It may seem strange that, even before this turning-point in my life, I should have cherished the ambition to be a writer. As I see it today, my only qualifications consisted in the two facts that I had nothing to tell and that, had I had anything to tell, I should not have known how to tell it. (Ibid., 181)

In his fictional autobiography,⁵ A Search for America, the character whose life closely parallels Grove's own comes to this conclusion:

A deep-rooted suspicion of all that is called learning, progress, culture pervaded all my thinking. I was no longer so sure of my superiority over those who had not received my "education." I had come to regard education as pretty much the opposite of what, in a sane world, it should be. It seemed to me to be a process of filling old wine into new skins. I began to suspect that there might be more wisdom in this "hermit's" mode of life than in that of the most refined and cultured scholar. Yes, I sometimes doubted whether he might not have deeper, truer

thoughts than anyone I had ever met before. (A Search for America, 260)

Thus, although Grove does not yet feel completely at ease in the new world environment, he has come to know it well and to respect much that he sees around him. Gradually a change takes place in him. At first he feels himself an outsider exiled from everything he values. He describes this feeling in a bitter passage in the autobiography:

The Kirghiz herdsmen had once been a spectacle to me--a moving spectacle, it is true; one that made my every faculty of response vibrate in a diapason of sympathetic resonance. But I had stood outside. So had I stood outside during my first years on American soil; had I not, I could not then have lived. I clung to Europe as my true country. (In Search of Myself, 227)

Soon, however, he realizes that Europe is no longer his home and that his adaptation to and experience in the new world qualifies him to speak for one specific group of people. During a period of self-assessment which occurs towards the end of his twenty years of wandering in North America, Grove speaks of the task he now sees before him in this manner:

. . . I could truthfully call my knowledge of the pioneering section of the North American continent unique. At a glance I could survey the prairie country from Kansas to Saskatchewan or Alberta; and at a thought I could evaluate, in my own way, of course, the implications of pioneer life. I, the cosmopolitan, had fitted myself to be the spokesman of a race--not necessarily a race in the ethnographic sense; in fact, not at all in that sense; rather in the sense of a stratum of society which cross-sectioned all races, consisting of those who, in no matter what climate, at no matter what time, feel the impulse of starting anew, from the ground up, to fashion a new world which might serve as the breeding-place of a civilization to come. (Ibid., 226-227)

Thus, the man who had presented himself throughout the first part of his book as a cosmopolitan, who had known and lived a life diametrically opposed to that of the settler, who was still an outsider, that man was to be the spokesman for the "race" of pioneers. Grove's experience in North America, balanced as it was by an awareness of the world beyond, qualified him to see the struggle of the pioneer in terms of the cosmic battle it was. Northrop Frye is one critic who agrees with Grove about his qualification in this respect. Frye once remarked:

. . . I feel that there ought to be a place in the literature of any language for those who do write it as a foreign language, and can perhaps in that way, say things that native writers can't say. A Search for America is certainly an immigrant's book. . . . Grove has to settle into Canadian Literature for what he is. And he has, I think, a permanent place in Canadian fiction--he tells you something about a country, and how an imagination has reacted to that country which you can't get anywhere else.⁶

Grove continues to describe his concept of the pioneer situation in these words:

These people, the pioneers, reaffirmed me in my conception of what often takes the form of a tragic experience; the age-old conflict between human desire and the stubborn resistance of nature. Order must arise out of chaos; the wilderness must be tamed. . . . To record that struggle seemed to be my task. Perhaps, very likely even, I was foredoomed to failure in my endeavour; in fact, I seemed to see even then that I was bound to fail; but the attempt had to be made. (In Search of Myself, 227)

Grove is here making a connection between his personal situation and that of the North American pioneers. Their battle is against the "stubborn resistance of nature" as they try to impose order on the chaos of the wilderness

around them. The artist's endeavour will be to impose order on the chaos of life itself. The last part of this quotation reveals that Grove was determined to proceed with his task, although he knew that only failure awaited him. As he sets out on his apparently futile quest, he has objectified his own personality, its characteristics, its goals, and its needs to such an extent that he has in fact created a persona which will represent him through the remainder of the autobiography. Grove himself recognized that this was an inevitable consequence of the creative process, for he once said:

At any given moment of creation the artist treats at least part of himself (mysterious as that "himself" may be to him) as something objective and outside of himself, as though it were a matter of observation. In other words, he reconstitutes himself, as it were, in two planes, one of these reconstitutions watching, the other watched.⁷

It is necessary now to analyze this persona, for this is the "self" which Grove found when he undertook his autobiographical search.

One method of identifying Grove's persona involves an investigation of his concept of the tragic hero as it appears in his work. One quickly discovers that there is a remarkable similarity between the idea of a tragic hero as enunciated in his essays and articles, as represented by the heroes of his novels, and as developed in the autobiographical persona. In his book of essays, It Needs to be Said, Grove develops his theory of tragedy as follows:

To have greatly tried and to have failed; to have greatly wished and to be denied; to have greatly longed for purity and to be sullied; to have greatly craved for life and to receive death: all that is the common lot of greatness upon earth. It would be misery indeed, instead of tragedy if there were not another factor in the equation. It would be crushing, not exalting. The tragic quality of Moses' fate--combining the terror which crushes with Aristotle's catharsis which exalts--lies in the fact that he accepted that fate of his; that he was reconciled to it; that he rested content with having borne the banner thus far; others would carry it beyond. In this acceptance or acquiescence lies true tragic greatness: it mirrors the indomitable spirit of mankind. All great endeavour, great ambition, great love, great pride, great thought disturb the placid order of the flow of events. That order is restored when failure is accepted. . . . (It Needs to be Said, 87)

The three portions of this definition, then, involve: an initial vision or expectation, the thwarting of that vision, and a final acceptance of failure. The failure of a frustrated hope can only be considered tragic if the vision itself is great, if its frustration is caused by circumstances beyond the power of the individual to control (this helplessness is implied by Grove's use of the phrase "the terror that crushes"), and if the situation is finally accepted as the inevitable destiny of man upon this earth. This sense of acceptance is probably the factor which would most trouble modern critics, but Grove does emphasize that acceptance comes only after great effort has been expended as in his own case.

In commenting on this aspect of Grove's concept of tragedy and the role of the tragic hero, the critic, Frank Birbalsingh, has said:

But Grove's characters do not respond passively. Although

they acknowledge domination by mysterious and hostile forces, they summon up all possible inner resources in a show of fierce resistance, even when they realize that resistance is futile. His heroes all succumb, or are likely to succumb to dominant extra-human influences; but not without, initially, waging valiant and resolute struggle. . . . Not in one instance does the author counsel supine fatalism or facile optimism; for while his characters acknowledge the ultimate futility of human aspirations, they nevertheless enjoin unremitting struggle, not instant submission.⁸

As Birbalsingh points out, it is extremely interesting to observe the parallels between Grove's abstract definition, the heroes of his own fiction, and himself in In Search of Myself. Most of his heroes have a vision or expectation of something which is to them important. Abe Spalding, for example, by the end of Fruits of the Earth, has indeed greatly tried and failed to assert economic and moral control over a vast area of land. John Elliot, the patriarchal figure in Our Daily Bread, greatly wishes to watch his family grow and settle around him, but is denied the fulfillment of his dream. Similarly, Neils Lindstedt, the protagonist in Settlers of the Marsh, greatly longs for purity, but is sullied by the whore he mistakenly marries. And finally, Len Sterner in The Yoke of Life, greatly craves life and receives instead death. Failure and frustration meet each of these characters.

The kinds of fictional vision are also various. They range from the "economic vision" (Fruits of the Earth, 17) of an inarticulate man such as Abe Spalding to the poetic glimpse of a unicorn which first makes young Len

Sterner aware of his artistic yearnings. However, despite the differences in the nature of the various visions, they all have in common the fact that they wield tremendous power and can influence every facet of the life they inform. Ultimately, this dependence upon a vision rather than upon reality cripples the characters and, ironically, contributes to their failure. Not all of the protagonists are able to understand or accept their failure. For example, John Elliot, in Our Daily Bread, isolates himself from his own children while they are growing up and then cannot comprehend their abandonment of the land and of him. Although his vision ends in failure, he never relinquishes it. Before he dies, he returns to the homestead where it had once seemed to flourish and tries and fails to understand his defeat. As W. E. Collin has remarked:

Tous les héros de Grove connaissent cette «formidable prise de conscience». Au midi de la vie, ils s'éveillent, font un retour sur leurs réalisations et découvrent qu'ils ont travaillé et peiné en vain. Le refrain de chacun de ses livres est: «la futilité de toutes choses».⁹

However, Grove himself insists that though his books may display the futility of all things, his is not a pessimistic vision. His remarks about the ending of The Yoke of Life illustrate this. Many consider this to be a supremely pessimistic novel, ending as it does with a double suicide, but Grove points out that though life may be rejected, Len Sterner's vision remains with him. In

a letter to Desmond Pacey, Grove explains that:

. . . the meaning of that ending is, of course, that Len wants something so much that all else falls away (education, etc.); that he will pay any price to get it. There is no intention of pessimism there.¹⁰

Another example of the kind of hero Grove creates is Neils Lindstedt, the central protagonist of Grove's first published novel, Settlers of the Marsh. As a young Swedish immigrant to Canada, Neils is determined to make for himself a good life in this new land where he can be free of the grinding poverty which would have been his lot in his homeland. The vision which is to dominate his actions occurs very early in the novel. Newly arrived in Manitoba, he is following a fellow Swede through deep snow towards the area in which he will eventually settle:

Suddenly, as they were entering the bush, where the moonlight filtered down through the meshes of leafless boughs overhead, a vision took hold of Neils: of himself and a woman, sitting on a mid-winter night by the light of a lamp and in front of a fire, with the pitter-patter of children's feet sounding down from above: the eternal vision that has moved the world and that was to direct his fate. He tried to see the face of the woman; but it entirely evaded him. . . . (Settlers of the Marsh, 36)

Later in the novel, the unknown woman who sits beside him becomes clearly recognizable as Ellen Amundsen: "There could be no doubt any longer: the woman in the picture was Ellen, the girl. He longed for her sight: he longed to speak to her: to show, to reveal his innermost being to her . . ." (ibid., 45). When he is rejected by Ellen, Neils marries Clara Vogel and sees his dream vanish before his eyes. Having lost the one woman he loved, he cannot

adapt his dream to the woman he has married. And so:

. . . he at last faced once more his ancient dream. Quite impersonally, with a melancholy kind of regret, with almost that kind of homesickness which overcomes us when we look back at the destinies, fixed and unchangeable, as unrolled in a very beloved book. He thought of that vision which had once guided him, goaded him on when he had first started out to conquer the wilderness: the vision of a wife and children. . . . He had accepted his own life as irretrievably ruined--at least as far as a life is the gradual approach, through an infinite number of compromises, to a preconceived goal, to an ideal, a dream or a vision which may never be completely realized. (Ibid., 138-139)

Thus, the quest of the idealist, the dreamer, or the tragic hero ends in failure and he must learn to accept his destiny. Of course in the case of Neils Lindstedt, the novel does continue and his fortunes sink even lower before he eventually attains happiness. But that happiness is less than it might have been and does not occur until the central protagonist has faced, though perhaps he has not understood, the hopelessness which the loss of his vision has engendered.

Grove, in In Search of Myself, does have a larger measure of self-awareness than do the heroes of his fiction. Also, his goal in life--"to be one day counted among the great poets or writers" (In Search of Myself, 96)--is more grandiose than those envisaged by Abe Spalding, Len Sterner, John Elliot, or Neils Lindstedt. But the parallels between the Grove of the autobiography and Grove's fictional heroes are still striking. It is now necessary to examine how Grove lived his life and how he adapted his vision to that life.

Grove had spent twenty years wandering over the North American continent as a manual labourer before he decided, in 1912, that his only hope for succeeding as an author depended upon his saving enough money to retire and devote all of his time to writing. He felt that he must escape the snares of western civilization and find a place where he might live cheaply and, at the same time, retain enough independence to be able to create. Thus, his vision of being the spokesman for a race became associated in his mind with the necessity of retreating to the wilderness. The wilderness motif, then, assumes great significance in the autobiography for it attaches itself to Grove's original vision and, in addition, acts as a counterbalance to the important themes of materialism and cosmopolitanism.

Grove has set forth his attitude to the simplicity and freedom of the wilderness in many places. He attempts to show that the wilderness is not merely a place, but a state of mind. Phil Brandon, the Grove-like hero of A Search for America, began his quest by looking for a place. Eventually, however, he discontinued his search for the real America, for the America of Abraham Lincoln, when he concluded that:

. . . I had gone out on a search when I started these tramps; I began to see that the search had been beside the point. So long as my search remained geographical, it must of necessity be a failure; at the same time this geographical search, though it might not bring me nearer to the thing sought for, was slowly fitting me to undertake

the real search. (A Search for America, 260)

What had begun as a search for place developed into a search for self: it became the "real search," the search with which Grove was also concerned. It is significant that the young Grove wrote A Search for America: the mature artist produced In Search of Myself. And Grove always believed that the artist's first duty was to know himself. He once said in an address to the Canada Club:

What we need is more dreamers who will stop and listen into themselves instead of mirroring the insane scrambling which goes on about us; who will go into the wilderness to discover new continents, not in any unexplored or undiscovered ocean, but in the human heart and soul. I have a haunting suspicion that that is the only corner left in this world where undiscovered continents are still abounding. Let us find worlds within the world to which we have not yet reacted. (It Needs to be Said, 114)

To find this new undiscovered continent, Grove believed that the artist needed solitude. However, his allegiances were destined to be divided, because he also, as spokesman or representative of a race, required a certain measure of commerce with the society around him. Thus, Grove commented in a Canadian Forum article that: "We artists . . . need solitude above all. Unfortunately, we also need books and life; and in that contradictory need lies our peculiar dilemma."¹¹ Grove believed that the "narcotics of a social life"¹² could deflect the artist from his true course. Therefore, in much the same way that all of his fictional heroes cut themselves off from the outer social, and even domestic, spheres in order to

pursue their personal goals whole-heartedly, similarly Grove felt it necessary to free himself from outside pressures and commitments. In other words, isolation has become a prerequisite to creativity.

There are two reasons for Grove's desire for a small dwelling on the fringes of the wilderness: one, economic and the other psychological. Grove believed sincerely and emphatically that the quality of life was reduced when the stress on material goods made one forget the basic essentials of life. One of his novels' protagonists, John Elliot, in attempting to explain his disappointment in his daughter, probably best summarizes this theme, one which is repeated throughout Grove's canon:

Because, within his own seed, he had seen a departure from that great purpose. Because his own child and her chosen husband saw the end of their lives--if they saw any at all--in what he considered to be inessentials. What were politics, what were the acquisition of wealth, the striving after luxuries--what were even so-called science and civilization in comparison with that greater, nobler end: the handing on of life and the living of that life in the "service of God"? . . . He was proud of belonging to the hidden ground-mass of the race which carried on essential tasks, no matter under what form of government, no matter under what conditions of climate and soil: he had lived and multiplied; he had grown, created, not acquired his and his children's daily bread: he had served God. (Our Daily Bread, 190)

Isolating oneself from the inessentials appears to be a way of finding spiritual purity. In A Search for America, for example, Phil Brandon is eventually able to be content with much less than he ever possessed in the way of

material wealth because he realizes that so many of the things which he once took for granted are inessential. He comes to believe this after reading in Carlyle's Sartor Resartus: "The fraction of life can be increased in value not so much by increasing your Numerator as by lessening your Denominator."¹³ By demanding less of life, Phil Brandon finds that its value increases. He is also influenced by Thoreau whose retreat to voluntary poverty allowed him to see life more clearly and impartially.¹⁴

One further example from the fiction must be mentioned because in The Yoke of Life Grove shows how the wilderness can destroy an individual. Len Sterner, the step-son of a pioneer engaged in a futile attempt to conquer his land, finds his every ambition and hope thwarted because of the pressure of necessity. Len wants to live the life of the spirit--he wants to be an artist--but while he remains in the pioneer area, all of his time is occupied with the struggle to survive. Life in the wilderness may be pure, and concerned only with the essentials of life, but unfortunately, art is not always considered one of these essentials. As Len Sterner's teacher remarks at one point: ". . . in a pioneer district genius is left to exhaust itself in the fight against adversity" (The Yoke of Life, 81). It is important to remember this point when one considers the dilemma which Grove faces as an artist. He complains

about the materialism and the distractions of life away from the wilderness at the same time as he longs for the cultural and intellectual climate of the sophisticated cities of Europe.

Of course the desire to escape life's complexities and to find spiritual sustenance in a retreat to the wilderness is not unique to Grove. It is undoubtedly one of the oldest mythic patterns in world literature. In both Christ's forty days in the desert and Thoreau's account of life at Walden the same theme emerges. The wilderness becomes a utopia in which man must battle with the universe and face nature in its most untamed form in order to exert his own right to existence. In American frontier mythology the wilderness was often seen as an initiatory experience. Huck Finn's determination to "light out for the Territory ahead of the rest"¹⁵ was symptomatic of the way in which the frontier was regarded by most Americans in the nineteenth century. At the conclusion of A Search for America Phil Brandon decides that: "America regards the future. America is an ideal and as such has to be striven for . . ." (A Search for America, 382). He has based this decision on America's still prevailing concern with the essentials of life, factors which he feels are rooted in the rural areas of the continent. A footnote informs the reader that with the advance of technological progress, the author has changed his opinion:

"I have since come to the conclusion that the ideal as I saw it and still see it has been abandoned by the U.S.A. That is one reason why I became and remain a Canadian" (ibid., 382). Canada was an area in which the wilderness could still be found. In 1912, western Canada was a pioneer region and a place where Grove could find the isolation and the concern with essentials which he sought.

For these reasons, Grove decided to move to Canada and teach. He knew that although teaching would allow him some free time for writing, his ultimate goal was to be completely free of economic pressure and able to devote all of his remaining years to his vision. He dreams of retiring to the wilderness, free from the cares of the world:

I at once began to plan my cottage: single-roomed if need be; in fact, preferably single-roomed; to be built on the hill slopes of the Pembina Mountains, above the ravine of the turbulent Pembina River.

I could not have existed, in the long run, without the sight of living water. There, five or six years hence, I should live as a hermit and a bachelor, writing my books. For, in spite of my recent despondency, I felt more than ever convinced that I had it in me to say what I wanted to say, and in a manner which would stand with the best a tortured and unbalanced age could produce. (In Search of Myself, 242-243)

And with this new vision to sustain him Grove starts to teach.

Before considering Grove's pedagogical career and his later life, it might be helpful to look at one other work of his in which the hero is a teacher. This is an unpublished chronicle entitled "The Life of St. Nishivara,"

which illuminates Grove's belief that the wilderness could be a source of spiritual strength. The biography of this saint bears a remarkable similarity to Grove's own life story as we know it. Like Grove, St. Nishivara "was born in the east" and "lived in the countries across the great sea till he reached the age of maturity, concerning himself with the vanities of the flesh and of this world" ("The Life of St. Nishivara," 1). He then crossed the ocean and another twenty years passed before he decided that "his life was empty and his soul unsatisfied" (ibid., 1). Grove continues the chronicle as follows:

17. He travelled all through this land, crossing it from east to west and from south to north.
18. And whenever he stopped, he taught.
19. His teaching was that this life as it was being lived by the many was vain and without sense.
20. But how to live better he did not show except for the vaguest hints.
21. But although the chief word among his words was nay he found many followers who begged him to stay with them and to give them light on what they were to avoid.
22. For even then there was about his teaching that which convinces and carries men along.
23. But whenever any asked him this, he shook his head, for he saw the dangers of his own teaching which, instead of leading to life led to death. (Ibid., 2)

The terse epigrammatic style of this work, as well as its mystic theme invite comparison with both the New Testament and Nietzsche's Also Sprach Zarathustra. Both Christ and Zarathustra go into the wilderness and then wander throughout the land preaching their message. St. Nishivara's message, however, is not that "God is dead," but rather that He lives and wants His commandments obeyed. Like

Christ, Nishivara is tempted:

But the evil that lives in man tempted him and spoke thus; Peace is the sweet of life. Thou livest in peace as thou art living now. Hide thyself from God, and he will not be able to find you. Man is evil; going to him will only disturb thy peace of mind. He lives in darkness and loves not the light. If you show him the light we will be angry, for the light will reveal his iniquity. (Ibid., 3)

The diction here is archaic, patterned, for the most part, on the King James version of the Bible. Also, the traditional Manichean dichotomy between the forces of light and the forces of darkness is being emphasized.

Nishivara resists temptation and finally becomes aware of what his purpose in life shall be:

And he guided himself and once more set out on his wanderings. Outwardly his journey proceeded just as before; but in his innermost heart he knew that he was no longer stepping at random but with a purpose. (Ibid., 4)

This trip north to his new home in the wilderness is very like Grove's last tramp to Winnipeg, once he has decided to seek a teaching position:

In starting out, I had, of course, hoped that on my way north--"home" as I called it--I should pick up an occasional day's work here and there; but I was disappointed. . . . Hardships undergone, not from necessity, but from choice, had always appealed to me; and at last I had a definite goal. Day after day I pushed on. (In Search of Myself, 245-246)

Nishivara builds himself a hut in the wilderness where he can live completely isolated from the rest of the world:

44. When spring came, he fashioned out of wood a rude sort of tool with which to till the ground; and he planted such seeds as he could procure in the wilds. He also walked more than thirty miles to his nearest neighbour's and borrowed from him a handful of the seeds of the Indian corn, promising to repay seed for

seed out of his harvest.

45. Thus he lived for many summers, slowly bettering his circumstances, but never calling on anyone to help him. ("The Life of St. Nishivara," 5)

During the winters Nishivara goes forth from the wilderness and preaches God's commandments. Eventually his message angers the people who have power in the nation and the result is that:

58. Thus, in a great city in the east of the land, he was put before a tribunal made up of the slaves of the world, and sentenced to die.
59. The times were troubled; and the law of war had been proclaimed; and thus he was shot by a band of soldiers who had not yet seen the light. (Ibid., 6)

Thus, Nishivara, like other tragic heroes in Grove's work, faces and accepts the failure of all his hopes. He meets his death with courage, refusing to accept the help which his disciples want to give. The wilderness had given him sufficient strength for his task, but that strength has not been sufficient to escape the snares of the city. The story of Nishivara's life, with its pronounced Christian overtones, is also a parable of Grove's life in Canada. Although he, too, chose the wilderness as his environment, he was eventually destroyed, or thought he was, by eastern critics.

Having explored Grove's idea of tragedy and its implications, a reader can readily recognize similarities between the artist's archetypal concept of the tragic hero, the examples of tragic heroes in his fiction, the Christ-like protagonist of the "St. Nishivara" parable, and the persona he himself assumes in the autobiography.

After the background pattern of symbolic events has been established in the childhood portion of the work, after the persona of the tragic hero has been developed and endowed with a mission in the early manhood section, then, finally, Grove can indeed begin what he had set out as his task in the Prologue. Now--more than halfway through the volume--begins the story of Grove's life as a writer in Canada.

CHAPTER IV

MATURITY: THE OLYMPIAN STANCE

The quality of the first half of In Search of Myself is markedly superior to that of the second half. Grove seems unable to be objective about his life as a writer in Canada, perhaps because he was still experiencing the frustrations he discusses. He had objectified the events of his childhood and early manhood to such an extent that they were transformed into symbols of stages in his development or epiphany-like moments of great self-awareness. In the final chapters of the autobiography, the use of these fictional techniques is completely abandoned and the image of himself which Grove has so far created all but disappears. Grove continues to assume the stance of the tragic hero he obviously believes himself to be, but he unconsciously reveals a self to whom his reader can only be less than sympathetic.

Grove documents with painstaking care his suffering during the last twenty years of his life, but this realistic chronological ordering of his past serves only as a background to what he believes to be the larger issues. These are vaguely philosophical problems which he attacks with great vigour but little coherence. Grove,

unlike Mann who systematized his enunciation of the artist's dilemma, can only complain about particular aspects of modern life which he personally abhors. His stand on most issues is curiously ambivalent. He seems, for example, unable to reconcile his desire for marriage with the dream of living a hermit-like existence. His attitude toward the cultural advantages and economic disadvantages of urban society is similarly ambiguous. At the same time as he yearns for the wilderness, he also complains of Canada's cultural isolation. In all of these matters, Grove reveals more than ever his essential egocentricity. The stance he assumes--the olympian stance--is noticeable in the autobiography and becomes particularly pronounced in his correspondence of this period. These materials reveal both his self-concept and a "self" of which he was apparently unaware.

In order to discover this "self" which eluded Grove, one might consider Tonio Kröger's final evaluation of himself. At the conclusion of Mann's novelle, the artist-hero says:

Ich bewundere die Stolzen und Kalten, die auf den Pfaden der grossen, der dämonischen Schönheit abenteuernd und den "Menschen" verachten,--aber ich beneide sie nicht. Denn wenn irgend etwas imstande ist, aus einem Literaten einen Dichter zu machen, so ist es diese meine Bürgerliebe zum Menschlichen, Lebendigen und Gewöhnlichen. Alle Wärme, alle Güte, aller Humor kommt aus ihr, und fast will mir scheinen, als sei sie jene Liebe selbst, von der geschrieben steht, dass Einer mit Menschen-und Engelszungen reden könnte und ohne sie doch nur ein tönendes Erz und eine klingende Schelle sei.¹

Tonio Kröger, then, has concluded that as an artist he is indeed different from other men, but it is particularly his love for them which enables him to be a poet. This charity seems to be the quality which Frederick Grove lacks. He was one of "die Stolzen und Kalten." He insisted that he stood, not like Mann's Tonio Kröger, apart from his society, but rather above it. In a letter written in 1914, and thus the earliest piece of Grove's correspondence now available, he wrote to a friend: "I stand apart, aloft, if you want to put it that way."² In the Preface to Over Prairie Trails he significantly remarked: "I love Nature more than Man" (Over Prairie Trails, xiii) and perhaps this statement illustrates the paradox contained in the latter half of the autobiography. Grove obviously does not love his fellow men and yet he is bitter because they, in turn, do not love, or at least venerate, him. Grove found many reasons for his failure: his marriage, the provincialism of the western wilderness, the materialism of the eastern cities, the lack of a Canadian audience, his poverty, and even the injustice of his critics are all factors contributing, he believed, to his defeat. He apparently never considered the possibility that he, not everyone else, might be responsible. Douglas Spettigue has explained how this attitude on Grove's part affects his critics by saying:

Perhaps it is Grove's olympian calm that ruffles them, as though the inevitability of his suffering and defeat were

proof of his unassailable superiority over the rest of us. We would like to see the flaw in the tragic hero, to assure us of his humanity. Was he so invulnerable in his wry acceptance of fate? Far from it.³

This olympian stance is a very obvious feature of the entire autobiography, but does become more pronounced in the latter half of the work. Grove saw himself as a tragic hero who suffered intensely and was finally defeated by cosmic forces greater than himself. Nevertheless, despite his suffering, despite even his failure, he endured.

When Grove entered the third phase of his life--after his first twenty years in Europe and his next twenty years wandering through North America, his announced intention was to teach school for seven or eight years, thereby accumulating enough capital to enable himself to retire to a small isolated cabin in the Canadian wilderness and work at his writing full-time. His hopes were soon frustrated, however, not so much by external circumstances in this instance, as by his own nature. He could not save what he had anticipated because he used his own money to equip a science laboratory in his school. In addition to this, he discovered a great need in the district for evening classes. He volunteered to organize and teach them and thereby forfeited the precious extra hours he might have given to his writing. The greatest set-back to his preconceived ambitions and goals, however, came in the person of Miss Catherine Weins, the primary teacher at the school of which he was principal. Grove fell in love with

this woman who was almost twenty years his junior and decided to marry her. Marriage was an extremely serious matter to Grove and one which he had already considered. Shortly after his decision to abandon his life of wandering and concentrate on his writing, he had written:

In spite of my determination to keep women out of my new scheme of life, I was at bottom certain that, sooner or later, they would re-enter it. I was not, by the chemistry of my mind, a constitutional celibate; I was not even exempt from the desire for a home, for a family, for a lasting appeasement of urges which, at times, ravaged my mind as well as my body. (In Search of Myself, 229)

Soon after this admission, however, Grove once again wrote of retiring to the wilderness with his writing and living the life of "a hermit and a bachelor" (ibid., 243). Women never entered into Grove's portrait of St. Nishivara, and when he spoke in idealistic terms of his own dream, they were also absent. Nevertheless, when confronted with a woman he could love, he was forced to reconsider his whole attitude. His reconsideration, though, did not preclude a certain dissatisfaction he apparently felt when he realized that he was choosing what he must have considered the less saintly path.

It was in his second year of teaching, after meeting Catherine Wiens, that Grove began to feel lonely and to sense that something was missing from his life. As he explained:

Meanwhile, at odd moments, mostly when going to or coming from school, I was subject to certain odd revulsions of feeling. The hotel was to me what his lair is to the beast of the field. Was that what I must look forward to for

the rest of my life? . . . any sort of social life simply did not exist for me. (Ibid., 273)

As he came to know Catherine Wiens better he found their relationship disturbing, for, as he remarked: "the very slight degree of intimacy which had been established made me wish for more" (ibid., 277). He decided in the summer of 1914 to visit her at her parents' farm in Saskatchewan and offer her marriage. Despite this resolution, his attitude to marriage was still ambiguous, for, as he relates in his autobiography, he could not help thinking ahead to the consequences of whatever her decision might be:

If I met with the rejection which I had to anticipate, I should have to take that as a sign that the ordinary, happy relations of a domestic life were not for me. Perhaps such as I had necessarily to go through life alone. I knew I should not die of a broken heart; perhaps I should grow a little harder, a bit, perhaps, more brittle. On the other hand, I should refocus my whole mind on my former aims. (Ibid., 278)

Grove wanted to marry her, but he was afraid that, in doing so, he would be relinquishing the dream which had given his life purpose since he had seen the Kirghiz herdsmen. He did not know how to balance the reality of his life with his dreams. Therefore, he believed that the situation would be even more complex if he were not rejected. He began his discussion of what his predicament would be in that event as follows:

But suppose I was not rejected?

Such a contingency presented a problem even more serious than the other.

So far, Miss Wiens did not even know that I was a writer. (Ibid., 280)

Grove then began to wonder whether his artistic temperament and ambitions could be compatible with marriage. He knew that he wanted marriage because he "wished to feel that [he] was living--no matter on which rung of the social or financial ladder" (ibid., 280). But his conscience forced him to wonder: "What did Miss Wiens think about it? Did she think about it at all? But, had such as I the right to want life" (ibid., 280)? At the same time as he is insisting on his unique status--"such as I"--Grove is also attempting to rationalize his desire for the ordinary things of life. Although he often considered his wish to write a curse which prevented him from living and enjoying a normal life, Grove found himself unable to resist the temptation to marry and provide himself with domestic security. According to his own account of his thought on the subject, he realized that he was not being objective:

I must make clear at this point that my emotional involvement was already such that it prejudiced any impartial weighing of issues. I was simply searching for points which might justify a step I was determined to take. The matter was no longer under debate at all: I was going to Saskatchewan; I was going to offer myself; and, even of this I was firmly convinced, I was going to be accepted. Before I took the next step, I was as good as married. (Ibid., 281)

Grove's ambivalent attitude to marriage was to continue even after the step had been taken. During the first year of his marriage he never found time to write. When his wife announced her pregnancy, he was profoundly shocked,

for he believed that duty now compelled him to surrender completely his artistic ambitions. He speaks of his feelings at that time as follows:

Not that the child was unwelcome; on the contrary; but even unborn it asserted its rights. From that moment on I renounced my old worldly aspirations; I must concentrate my whole endeavour on a worldly career. (Ibid., 286)

But Grove did not despite this sorrowful statement completely renounce his old aspirations, and because of the character of his wife, he did not have to do so. The sequel to his personal love story, the history of his marriage, reveals that his misgivings were ill-founded, to say the least. Throughout their years together it was Mrs. Grove who provided the help, the encouragement, and often the economic means for him to continue writing. She did not prevent him from realizing his ambitions: she enabled him to attempt to do so. Arthur Phelps, who was a friend of the Groves, perhaps best summarized the relationship of the couple when he remarked:

Mrs. Grove is one of those women who comes into a room and stands in her own right, if you know what I mean? And I think there was constantly operative devotion between those two. She was committed to the idea that her man was a great writer, and I think he tended to assume that there was something in that.⁴

It was in the early years of that marriage that Grove found the first publishers for his books, that he revised or wrote the great prairie novels, and that he became enough of a celebrity to undertake three speaking tours across Canada. During the more barren 1930's and

1940's when they were living in the east, Mrs. Grove supported her husband both mentally and materially. In some sections of the autobiography, Grove is obviously aware of the tremendous sacrifices that his wife made for him. He speaks glowingly of her encouragement, her faith in him, and her willingness to help him realize his ambitions as a writer. At one point, indeed, he describes a never-to-be-accomplished wish to produce a book about their life together from her point of view. He says of this project:

Often, during the last stretches of this quarter-century of our married life, the plan has come to me of writing the whole story of that life from her point of view; and whenever I thought of such a plan, an inevitable title attached itself to the unwritten book: The Life Heroic. It is most unlikely that I shall ever write that book even if time and occasion served, I don't think I could do it; and time and occasion will no longer serve; I have given up and resigned myself. But I feel very poignantly that the world is the poorer without it. There are many kinds of heroism; and it is not those that become spectacular which are the most inspiring. (In Search of Myself, 339)

This tribute is a warm and sincere one and Grove's love and admiration for his wife are obvious. However, in the final pages of In Search of Myself, Grove suggests quite openly that it was his marriage which caused his failure as a writer. He speaks of the plans he had for books, plans which he was never able to work out. He explains his failure in this manner:

The plans that emerged--for in spite of all they did emerge--were still-born from the start. Yet I feel as certain as I have ever felt of anything, though it can never be proved, that they would have matured of their own

accord had I lived in a hut in the bush, never caring, What shall we eat, what shall we drink, wherewithal shall we clothe ourselves? . . . That maturing of my plans would have satisfied me; and I do not think it beyond the possibilities that it would have redounded to the benefit of my wife, my country, perhaps of mankind. Was it worth it? Suppose I went out on the road once more, leaving wife and child? . . . I should taste once more the triumph of creation, the utter triumph of the pangs of birth; and I should grow inwardly as nothing can make a man grow except the vicarious living of scores of other lives. But, after all, there are things which a man does not do. (Ibid., 457)

The reason for this fluctuating attitude on Grove's part was his feeling that by acknowledging his need for a wife, he had somehow compromised himself in failing to sacrifice everything for the sake of his vision. He could not seem to reconcile his stance as a lonely, misunderstood voice crying in the wilderness--the persona he adopts in the autobiography--with his position as a happy husband and father.

When Grove describes his marriage, one can sense that he is beginning to deceive himself about his life. In much the same way that he had blamed his father for the loss of his birthright, he was subsequently to blame the marriage for the crippling of his ambitions and ideas. Although he loved and respected his wife, he never seemed to recognize the unfairness of this position. While attempting to justify himself, he unconsciously reveals his overwhelming concern for his own image and his lack of concern for any other person.

Grove blamed not only his marriage, but many other

factors for what he termed his failure. One of his favourite theories was that the materialism of the east had robbed him of his creativity. He makes this charge in the autobiography as follows:

I want to make it clear, emphatically, and beyond the possibility of misunderstanding, that what happened to us after the wilderness had been rejected, was done by the east which, in its worship of money and nothing but money, is an outpost of the United States (Ibid., 409)

This remark contradicts Grove's earlier statement in A Search for America that the ideal he sought in vain in the United States had not been abandoned by Canada. Now, he apparently decided that the values of eastern Canada were as corrupt as those of the United States.

Throughout the fourteenth and final chapter of the autobiography, Grove lists the factors which have caused him to reject the idea of material progress. However, while he is rejecting the idea, he is obviously accepting the benefits. He appears totally unaware of the irony of his position here as he describes what he somehow considered a repudiation of material progress. He speaks, for example, of the differences between using horses or cars as a means of conveyance. The machines of this mechanistic age "need upkeep, repair, and replacement. They neither recover; nor do they reproduce themselves. They are the bottomless pit" (ibid., 455). And yet Grove bought a car as early as 1922. He also criticizes quite severely a nameless acquaintance who lent him a radio:

"During the winter of 1937 a thoughtless person inflicted upon us the loan of a radio set which was in her way" (ibid., 453). Immediately after this incident Grove himself went out and purchased "the smallest receiving set [he] could buy" (ibid., 454). However, even while he admits enjoying music he had not heard for fifty years, he still complains: "We forget the implications. No matter what the salesman said, the set consumed current; a license fee was needed for its operation; in time it would require repairs" (ibid., 454). After he bought and stocked his dairy farm in Simcoe, Grove discovered "property you own, owns you" (ibid., 418). Later when he and his wife decided that this property had to be renovated and improved, he insists that: "Personally, I could have gone on living under any conditions" (ibid., 442) but that "[his] wife had set her heart on going through with the scheme; not to do so would have meant a personal defeat to her" (ibid., 444). Grove, however, wants his reader to be aware of the sacrifice he was making when he agreed to the repair plan:

For days, for weeks we talked of nothing else; and, while we were living through this mental upheaval, I, of course was doing no work. It was impossible to live the life of the imagination when material actualities demanded undivided concentration. (Ibid., 444)

It was undoubtedly difficult for Grove to live the life of the imagination in a materialistic world, but he did obviously enjoy possessing the "toys of a modern material

civilization" (ibid., 454).

Eventually, however, Grove's petty complaints against material progress are revealed as relatively insignificant in the face of his very serious concern for the depreciation in the quality of life caused by man's externalization of his needs and desires. As he insists: "We are apt to forget the cost of material progress, the cost to the nation and to mankind, the cost in human happiness, in human life" (ibid., 448). In addition to this loss of happiness, Grove also felt that material progress robbed men of their freedom and transformed them into slaves. This was the theme of his 1944 novel, The Master of the Mill, in which man could not master the mill and was instead mastered by it. In his earlier novel, The Yoke of Life, Len Sterner, Grove's artist-hero, tries to explain his compulsion to leave cities behind and return to the very frontiers of civilization. He says:

To create machines we have made half the world of men into slaves--slaves that till the field and slaves that fire the engines to turn the wheels. There's only one state of society in which you can do without slaves; where all men are free because they live in voluntary poverty and simplicity. And that you find in the wilderness only. (The Yoke of Life, 321)

Or, as Grove explains his personal attitude in the autobiography:

. . . the question arises what consumes more of "life," not only for the individual but for mankind: to do a thing in the direct or indirect way: to draw the water from a well or to have it pumped by a motor, for which we pay out money--that is life--in purchase and upkeep; money which

enslaves him who gives it and him who receives it. . . .
 (In Search of Myself, 453)

Throughout this argument, in which the objects of Grove's attack range from the pernicious, American-invented installment buying plan to modern lather-hungry shaving brushes, Grove continually reiterates his conviction that modern materialistic life is not really worth living. Of course, the only kind of life whose value he can see would be that lived in the wilderness. Grove's description of the last twenty to thirty years of his life is built upon this tension between the material values of eastern Canada and the spiritual ones of the western frontier.

However, the spiritual values of the western frontier had not seemed so apparent to Grove while he actually lived there. Although he claimed that the wilderness was his true home, that only its values were worthwhile, and that he longed to return there, he was actually unsuited for that kind of life. His own account of his years in the west reveals his inability to live among the people of the Canadian wilderness: the pioneers whose virtues he admired distrusted the fact that he was a foreigner and an intellectual. Grove's relationships with all of the Manitoba communities in which he lived were hostile. While there, he, the cosmopolitan, constantly complained about the provincialism of the society and about the lack of intellectual stimulation. The decision to move east had been a painful one for Grove to make

because he had previously believed that the wilderness, or the frontier, was the only place where he would be able to create. Nevertheless, he did make the choice, although there were other factors involved.

In 1927 the Groves' only daughter, May, had died suddenly. Her parents, in their sorrow, reappraised their lives. They were then economically comfortable, but they soon decided to move east. Their home in Rapid City, Manitoba, was full of painful memories of their lost child, and Grove believed that a change in locale was necessary, especially for his wife. She, at that time, suggested to her husband that they retreat to the wilderness. She was in favour of their going north into the area surrounding the conjunction of the foot of Lake Winnipeg and the Nelson River. Grove speaks of her plan as follows:

. . . my wife proposed to go north, into the wilderness . . . there to live an entirely primitive life, in just such a shack as I had dreamt of in 1912 before I had allowed myself to be sidetracked by the interlude of my teaching career. I would gladly have done so had it not been for one single thing. . . . (Ibid., 408)

Grove says that his reason for rejecting his wife's proposal is his consideration of her. May's death had affected them both profoundly and the possibility of their having a second child apparently caused Grove to want to remain closer to civilization. He chose southwestern Ontario instead of the wilderness of northern Manitoba. Later he admitted that he might have made a mistake, for, as he says:

. . . poverty had been my dream in 1912 when I had exchanged manual labour for mental labour. For a brief spell that desire for a shack and utter freedom had been possible of fulfillment; when we had left the west, we had had a total of five thousand dollars, the interest on which would have given us twenty-five dollars a month. If, as my wife proposed, we had then gone to the northern foot of Lake Winnipeg, I should have been able to hammer out the ultimate implications of my thought. (Ibid., 408)

At another point in the autobiography, Grove contradicts himself again and attributes still another motive to the decision to leave the prairies. He says: "I had come east with the definite purpose of solving our economic problem" (ibid., 405). Grove's whole attitude to the move east is ambivalent. Whether it resulted from concern for his wife, from economic considerations, or whether it was symptomatic of an unacknowledged desire for worldly recognition, the relocation, in 1929, marked an important divide in his life. He was no longer Grove, the wanderer, or Grove, the teacher, but very definitely identified as Grove, the writer. Perhaps the move was itself an attempt to see himself more concretely in this new role. He never admitted to himself that he had personally rejected the wilderness. He believed that circumstances had combined to force the move east upon him.

What all of these contradictory observations about the east and the west seem to reveal is that Grove's was a personality incompatible with both areas. He did not realize this and since his last years were spent in the east he tended to criticize eastern materialistic values

severely while idealizing the spiritual values of the west. And so, his continual cataloguing of economic disasters, his bitterness at the lack of financial remuneration forthcoming from his life's work, and even his insistence on his own and his family's suffering are not merely the ill-tempered pronouncements of a man unable to cope with failure, but rather the deeply felt frustrations of an idealist doomed--perhaps by his own choice--to live in an environment hostile to him. Thus, when Grove describes his mature life as a writer in Canada he is attempting to do more than berate materialistic society. He wants to differentiate ideologically between the way of life found in the east and the wilderness ideal he imagined to exist in the west. At one point in the autobiography he states quite clearly that the theme of his personal history is the "conflict between material and spiritual things" (ibid., 370). This theme, then, would be an echo of many things: the differences he had noticed as a child in the personalities of his parents; the gradual sense of the spirit, as opposed to the body, he had developed while living in luxury in Europe; and the contradictions he had discovered in American society during his wandering period. In his maturity, he believed that the wilderness he had been forced to abandon, was the home of spiritual values whereas the society in which he was then living cared only for material things.

Grove's position in eastern society was that of a prophet, a seer who understood the errors being committed by everyone around him. But his predictions of doom resounded unheard through the Canadian wilderness. In this role, Grove of course resembles his own creation, St. Nishivara, the blaring car horn of the Prologue, and the Kirghiz herdsmen of the Russian steppes. He must suffer, despite his own spiritual purity, for the mistakes of those who have accepted the material values of the city. The city is a corrupting influence in all of Grove's prairie fiction and often causes great and painful disruption in the lives of his heroes.

Much of Grove's correspondence reveals an attempt on his part to assert simultaneously his material vulnerability and spiritual invulnerability. He insists on his own special status. For example, in a 1940 letter he chastizes a young friend of the family for calling Grove and his wife "normal": "As for that normality of which you speak, naturally, we are anything but 'normal' people; and we hold those that are a bit in horror; at least I do; my wife certainly to a less extent."⁵ Much earlier, in 1927, he had explained to Watson Kirkconnell that it was sometimes difficult for him to sympathize with others because "since I am afflicted with a major trouble, I forget that others are worried with the minor ones."⁶ This constantly reiterated insistence on his own problems

is particularly characteristic of Grove's correspondance with Lorne Pierce. Their letters to each other cover the period from 1936 to 1941, during which time Pierce was an extremely influential member of Canadian literary circles. Because of him, in 1934 Grove was awarded what he called "the one single honour that has ever come to me out of Canada" (In Search of Myself, 420), the Lorne Pierce Gold Medal for Literature. In 1941 Pierce nominated Grove for membership in the Royal Society of Canada. Grove's reaction to the nomination is interesting:

I should like to accept but find there is a fine of \$20.00 to pay, plus \$25 or \$30 expenses for attending the Introduction of new fellows; and, frankly, I haven't got that money.

Since you were the fellow who proposed me and more or less sponsored the election, I should like to ask your advice as to what to do about it.⁷

Pierce's reply to this thinly disguised plea must not have been too promising for Grove's next letter to him begins as follows:

Two or three days ago, in desperation, under pressure from a number of friends, I sent the \$20 to the R.S.C. I ought not to have done this, of course, because it was part of a badly needed small sum of which more in a moment. As for my going to Kingston, it is, as far as I see, out of the question; and yet I see no sense in belonging to the society unless I go to their meetings.⁸

Grove seems here to have forgotten his dignity and to be asking for financial assistance. His tendency to exaggerate his situation reveals itself in his use of the phrase, "in desperation." The correspondance with Pierce seems particularly innundated with references to Grove's

always desperate economic situation. There is nothing subtle about the way in which Grove mentions these problems to Pierce. For example, Grove could, and did, conjure up the image of his small son starving:

Unless something . . . happens, I am faced with losing my place (or \$14,000 invested in it), to the government for about \$2000, and the banks for the sum specified. If I do lose it, I shall have no roof over my head and no bread to put in the mouth of my little son.⁹

In another letter, he again uses the word "desperate," mentions his poor health, and seems to imply that anyone but he would be broken by the tremendous strain he is under:

Just what will happen in my present situation is not yet clear. If I were to follow my own inclination, I'd go on the road in spite of desperately ill health; for most of the time I feel that, if I were my dog, I'd sit down on my haunches and howl with my pains.¹⁰

One further example will serve to indicate the amount of detail into which Grove went when he was writing to Pierce:

My total income during 1940 has been less than \$400. In 1941 it will likely be still less, one item of \$2.50 a week having reduced itself already to \$1.25 (teaching). You speak slightly of a \$20 bill; to me that is almost a fortune.¹¹

It is useful to contrast the tone of these letters and of the autobiography, when it too is concerned with financial matters, with remarks later made by Mrs. Grove about those same years:

So much has been said, over and over again, about our economic affairs, as if they were the most important things in our lives, and they were not at all, at all. We were happy. We faced problems that arose. We solved them. We lived. We laughed. We talked. We loved each other. We

were satisfied with each other's company. And these things, the economics have never been as big a mountain to us, as they seem to be to the public.¹²

Neither Grove nor his wife were consciously lying when they made these diametrically opposed remarks. Mrs. Grove's truth about those years is different from her husband's truth, because she is remembering a marriage that was happy and fulfilled, and happiness and fulfillment therefore become the theme of her story. Grove, on the other hand, was not describing his marriage so much as his career. His life as a writer was characterized by frustration and rejection: thus, the tone of his public utterances. The two stories represent two points of view working upon the same set of circumstances. Perhaps they also indicate that Grove was interpreting his life according to his preconceived opinion of what that life represented.

Although Grove prefers to leave the impression with his reader that he was impervious to the disasters which befell him, his bitterness very often shows through his olympian facade. Thus, although he says repeatedly that he would never deign to reply to criticism, he does do so, repeatedly. For example, in a 1929 letter to Raymond Knister, Grove first contradicts a critic's remarks about one of his novels and then adds:

I have never answered a review and do not intend this to be an answer; but perhaps you will pardon a man twice your age if he says that he is not impressed by any critical acumen displayed.¹³

Another letter to Lorne Pierce takes issue with something

that Grove was told Pierce had said about The Yoke of Life:

A few days ago I was told that somewhere and sometime you have called my book The Yoke of Life a 'pale imitation' of Jude the Obscure, and my Our Daily Bread an imitation of Sussex Gorse. As a mere statement of fact I wish to say that The Yoke of Life was known to A. L. Phelps in manuscript as early as 1923; and that I made the acquaintance of Jude the Obscure (which I admire tremendously) in 1925. Sussex Gorse is unknown to me today. Don't think for a moment that I am peeved; nobody, as my friends know, can think less of his work than I do; I have to be clubbed into publication.¹⁴

Some of the statements in this letter are demonstrably false: Lorne Pierce knew only too well that Grove did not have to be "clubbed into publication," for most of Grove's manuscripts, those eventually published and those not, were submitted to Pierce over the years. Grove may say that he does not think much of his own work, but he apparently thought Pierce's criticism serious enough to incorporate his defense of it into the autobiography:

Incidentally, speaking for once in self-defence, this fact alone should have protected me against Lorne Pierce's assertion that The Yoke of Life is a "pale imitation of Jude the Obscure." The Yoke of Life may be an artistic failure; and, personally, I consider Jude the Obscure a very great book, artistically one of the greatest novels ever written; but it is a pessimistic book; whereas The Yoke, whatever it may be worth, stands beyond pessimism and optimism. It was, by the way, conceived before Jude was written; and it was written before Jude came to my hand. (In Search of Myself, 357)

Grove's reaction to unfavourable reviews of Our Daily Bread shows how much his pride in his craft had been hurt:

. . . the reception of Our Daily Bread has disgusted me a bit too much. 'Below criticism'--too much of that: 'a degree below mediocrity,' etc., etc. Now you may like the

book or not but the workmanship is not mediocre.¹⁵

The most blatant example of Grove's taking issue with a critic occurs in his rebuttal to Robert Ayre's Canadian Forum review of Fruits of the Earth.¹⁶ Grove replied to Ayre's remarks as follows:

I have never yet answered reviews, but a plain statement of fact is simply called for in reply to the ill-humoured and ill-mannered effusion which you printed in the last issue of The Canadian Forum by way of a notice of my book, Fruits of the Earth.

. . . of course, even after having put close to a decade of labour into this work, it would still be folly to expect so shallow a reading as your reporter has apparently given it to reveal the fact to him.¹⁷

Grove often makes the error of judging a work's value by the amount of effort which has gone into producing it.

The fact that a decade of labour was invested in Fruits of the Earth is, of course, irrelevant to an objective critical evaluation of the novel. Grove first criticizes the way in which the critic read his book, and then assumes his tragic, invulnerable stance and patronizingly concludes:

As your reporter says, after having swung his arms for awhile, quite unnecessarily, 'The drama of this book is the drama of facts, of events.' If he had said that at the start, and not much else, the notice would not suffer from its air of disingenuousness. O si tacuisses, philosphus mansisses!

But enough. Time will judge. I have never been in a hurry. Meanwhile I should like to set your young man a task. Let him read Shakespeare's Timon of Athens and criticize it as a love story or a detective yarn. Shakespeare, as he may not know, is now dead and can afford to smile, from beyond the grave, at such futile efforts.¹⁸

Grove seems to imply in his last sentence that the critic's efforts are futile when they are directed towards criticizing him.

As these examples should demonstrate Grove's olympian stance was a stance, and despite his professions of invulnerability he was deeply concerned about the opinion of others. He once wrote to Lorne Pierce, then the publisher of Ryerson Press, urging him to send some copies of Grove's latest novel, Two Generations, to the local Simcoe drug store. He says in that letter: "I couldn't very well do this myself without loss of dignity. This is a small town, you know; and I must hold my own high."¹⁹ Grove was constantly trying to hold his own high.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION: GROVE AS TRAGIC HERO

The Prologue to In Search of Myself first appeared in the University of Toronto Quarterly in 1940, two years after the completion of the autobiography manuscript, but six years before the publication of the entire work. In this document Grove is again concerned with the image he presents of himself. But here the querulousness, the intense bitterness, and the arrogance of the latter half of the autobiography are not obtrusive and the reader can again feel sympathetic towards this man who suffers because of the cultural isolation of his environment. Even Douglas Spettigue, while recognizing the rhetorical technique Grove uses here--"the clear aim of this passage . . . is to gain the effects of contrast through heightened diction"¹--admits that it is "one of the most moving of all accounts of the isolation of the artist in our environment" and that "emotionally the whole Prologue rings true."²

Grove has here again adopted the technique which made his description of his childhood so vividly memorable. He has taken an event from his life and by underscoring its significance at the same time as he presents it dramatically, he has endowed it with symbolic value. The car horn which

blares across the swamps of southwestern Ontario is meant to be an objective correlative for the voice of the unrecognized Canadian author. The image of the man in the car, surrounded by the desolation of the wilderness, sounding the car horn and heard not at all, or only by a friendly, but unknowing, inhabitant of that wilderness is an extremely effective means of representing the problem of the Canadian artist.

Those problems are of course described more thoroughly in the body of the autobiography, but in the work as a whole, Grove's emphasis is not on the general implications of the Canadian environment for an artist, but rather on his personal situation and his personal tragedy. It is this egocentric focus which becomes particularly irritating in the work's final chapters. An autobiography is, by definition, a self-centred document, but when an author unconsciously reveals a self quite unlike his own conception of himself, then, his artistic vision can be said to have failed. Grove never questions his artistic vision: the failure of which he repeatedly speaks is his inability either to find an audience or to adapt to an acquisitive society whose values he detests. Some of Grove's statements about the reasons for his failure may reveal more than he intends.

After the move to eastern Canada, Grove maintained that "slowly [he] was becoming a master of his craft" (In

Search of Myself, 407). In order to explain why others did not recognize this development of his talent he says:

It will be seen that I had not yet gauged the capacious dearth of mature judgement and sure taste in Canadian readers. Nor had I as yet fully comprehended the utterly hopeless ineptitude prevailing in what is commonly called literary criticism in Canada. . . . Surely, in a population of nine millions there must be a handful of people capable of appreciating genuine effort; but I still failed to see how small that handful is. (Ibid., 407)

The patronizing tone of this passage and its insistence on Grove's supposed naiveté about the futility of writing in Canada mask a very alarming assumption that he has apparently made. He wants to be appreciated for the "genuine effort" he has expended. No mention at all is made of quality. This confusion of effort with excellence is a serious critical lapse and one against which a young and possibly nationalistic literature such as Canada's must particularly guard. Grove makes this error frequently, for even in the Prologue he remarks: "I . . . in spite of often titanic endeavour, had lived and worked in obscurity" (ibid., 4). Neither titanic endeavour nor prolonged and unwarrented suffering can operate as a substitute for artistic excellence. Grove's assumption throughout the last half of the autobiography is that by describing his suffering and by portraying himself as a tragic hero, he will establish himself as an artist. Instead, he reveals his own lack of self-awareness and objectivity.

However, it is important to emphasize that Grove did suffer and that he did have legitimate cause for

complaint in some areas. He constantly insisted that the Canadian cultural scene was a barren one. All of his public utterances--his novels, his essays, his unpublished speeches and addresses--seem designed to make his reader or his listener aware of how deprived he felt of intellectual stimulation in this country. It is surprising, therefore, when reading his correspondence, to discover how fresh and enthusiastic Grove's reactions were to things he was reading. Here he does not assume the tone of an intellectual superior, but instead writes eagerly and simply to people who shared his interests. During his years in Manitoba, Watson Kirkconnell frequently sent him books: later, in Ontario, Robert Crouch performed the same function. With both of these men, Grove exchanged long letters detailing his opinions of the books they had lent him. During the period from 1925 to 1940, Grove read avidly, books on every subject imaginable.³ He frequently borrowed anthologies and critical interpretations of literary periods. He read nineteenth century and modern works by French, German, English, American, and Canadian novelists and poets. He read philosophy and sociology texts and was particularly interested in histories of ancient Greece and Rome. Such an omnivorous appetite for books indicates how thoroughly Grove was educating himself. Despite all of his comments on his earlier cultural education in Europe, one cannot help but feel that he was

discovering many of these writers and works for the first time. He discovered them in many ways as, for example, this request to Kirkconnell might indicate: "By the way, who is Sassoon or Sasson? I ran across a fragment the other day, at the clinic, in Brandon, reading over somebody's shoulder--a fragment that happened to catch my eye."⁴ In a letter to Crouch some seven years later Grove specifically comments on his isolation from the mainstream of western intellectual thought:

I have been indulging in an orgy of reading and again realized how much I missed by my isolation. On the one hand, I find much encouragement: others are thinking as I do; on the other, I become conscious how futile an isolated effort like mine must necessarily be.⁵

This candid and simple recognition on his part of the futility of his effort is more tragic than all of his bitter denunciations of Canadian culture. Whether or not he had ever experienced a stimulating intellectual life in Europe, he did obviously suffer from a lack of it in Canada. It is therefore understandable that his bitterness should sometimes occasion remarks such as: "There is no greater curse that can befall a man than to be afflicted with artistic leanings in Canada"⁶ or "Canada is a non-conductor with regard to any kind of spiritual current."⁷ Grove was a Canadian, but he could not help but regard his vocation as a tragedy in this national context.

Grove felt particularly deprived in Canada by the lack of a general or a critical audience to whom he could

speaking. He uses the image of a falling tree in a forest to explain what he means:

But the chief reason no doubt was that I had never had an audience; for no matter what one may say, he says it to somebody; and if there is nobody to hear, it remains as though it had never been said; the tree falling in a forest where there is none to hear produces no sound. A book arises as much in the mind of the reader as in that of the writer; and the writer's art consists above all in creating response; the effect of a book is the result of a collaboration between writer and audience. That collaboration I had failed to enforce. . . . (In Search of Myself, 6)

Without the stimulation of an intelligent reading public, Grove believed the artist could not fulfill his function in society. However, it can be argued that although Canada's population might not be able to support a literature as easily as could that of Britain or the United States, Grove did not lack an audience. As Desmond Pacey's recent anthology of criticism demonstrates, Grove's novels were thoroughly reviewed and his work as a whole was already being discussed by critics during the 1930's. But Grove always reacted very badly to criticism of any sort. When he complained about his lack of an audience, he undoubtedly meant that he lacked an appreciative audience, one who would accept his own estimation of his work and therefore venerate him as a man. Morley Callaghan, who was an accepted and very well-known author during the 1930's, once met Grove at a party and has commented on Grove's personal aura as follows:

And Grove was there--a tall man, a kind of taciturn man,

a man who seemed to sort of deliberately hold himself aloof. I had nothing particular to say to him because he created that impression of wanting to be taken for a, well a great man.⁸

Grove did want to be taken for a great man. But he failed, not in the sense that he spoke of failure in the autobiography, for Grove believed that he had failed as a practical man, but not as an artist. His failure was more basic than this. Like his heroes, he sensed the futility of life and countered that feeling of hopelessness with a vision of himself as suffering artist and tragic hero. Like John Elliot in Our Daily Bread he could not understand his apparent failure and refused to surrender his vision. The real Grove will not be found in Sweden. The "mystery" of Grove, the man, can be solved in those final chapters of his autobiography in which he continues to assert the persona he has constructed for himself although the mask has slipped and revealed the man behind it.

This Grove is remarkably like the protagonists of his fiction. The way in which he interprets his own life and translates it into a drama with himself as the tragic hero reveals much about his art and his vision. The autobiography is much more than a history of this particular Canadian artist or an interesting comment on the position of the artist generally in Canada. When closely and critically read, In Search of Myself can guide Grove's audience to a greater understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of his thought and his fictional techniques.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter I

¹Pacey, "Introduction," Frederick Philip Grove, 2

²Ibid., 4.

³Sutherland, Frederick Philip Grove, 24.

⁴Spettigue, Frederick Philip Grove, 3.

⁵Ibid., 56.

⁶See Pacey, "In Search of Grove in Sweden," Journal of Canadian Fiction, I (Winter, 1972), 69-73.

⁷Grove, "Author's Note to Fourth Edition," A Search for America, n.p.

⁸Pascal, "Autobiography as Art Form," Stil-und Formprobleme in der Literatur, ed. Paul Böckmann, 118.

⁹James, "Preface," The Spoils of Poynton, v-vi, ix.

¹⁰André Maurois, Aspects of Biography, trans. Sydney Roberts, 160.

¹¹Ibid., 160-161.

¹²Spettigue, Grove, 2.

¹³Ibid., 7.

¹⁴Spettigue does obliquely suggest this at one point. See Grove, 21.

¹⁵Ibid., 56.

¹⁶Barrett, "The Autobiographer's Art," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, XXVII (Winter, 1968), 216.

¹⁷Pascal, "The Autobiographical Novel and the Autobiography," Essays in Criticism, IX (April, 1959), 147.

¹⁸Shapiro, "The Dark Continent of Literature: Autobiography," Comparative Literature Studies, V (December, 1968), 439.

Chapter II

¹See, for example, an unpublished address delivered to the English Club of Simcoe, Ontario on January 9, 1933: "In the history of the last three thousand years we can . . . internationally, discern three summits of literary production; and these three summits can be labelled with three names: Homer, Shakespeare, Goethe." And Grove, in another address entitled "Books," described Mann as a novelist who belonged "to a small company of those whose utterances will one day form part of the great spiritual heritage of mankind."

²Goethe Selected Poems, ed. Barker Fairley, 184.

³Spettigue, Grove, 7.

⁴The autobiography must have been written after "The House of Stene" fragment. Grove says that he started to write In Search of Myself in the late 1930's; it was first published in 1946 and describes his life until 1939. Parts of "The House of Stene," on the other hand, are exactly incorporated into a short story, "The Boat," which appeared in the Winnipeg Tribune Magazine as early as 1926. Spettigue also discusses revisions of "The House of Stene" manuscript which later appeared in the manuscript of the autobiography. See Spettigue, Grove, 7.

⁵Pacey, "In Search of Grove in Sweden," Journal of Canadian Fiction, I (Winter, 1972), 71-72.

⁶In Search of Myself, 370. See also the discussion of this conflict in Chapter 4.

Chapter III

¹Grove's vision is similar to that experienced by Dedalus at the end of Chapter 4 of A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. See Joyce, Portrait, 238, 253.

²"Already [while in Paris the following year] I was writing, chiefly poetry, and in French. Even at Hamburg I had written and tried to break into print; without success, I am glad to say." In Search of Myself, 163.

³Compare this period in Grove's life with, for example, this description of Tonio Kröger's youth: Aber da sein Herz tot und ohne Liebe war, so gerieter in Abenteuer des Fleisches, stieg tief hinab in Wollust und heisse Schuld und litt unsäglich dabei Ein Ekel und Hass gegen die Sinne erfasste ihn und ein Lechzen nach Reinheit und wohlständigem Frieden, während er doch die Luft der Kunst atmete So kam es nur dahin, dass er, haltlos zwischen krassen Extremen, zwischen eisiger Geistigkeit und versehrender Sinnenglut hin-und hergeworfen, unter Gewissennöten ein erschöpfendes und ausserordentliches Leben, das er, Tonio Kröger, im Grunde verabscheute. Mann, Tonio Kröger, 23.

⁴Spettigue, Grove, 6.

⁵Grove himself calls A Search for America a fictionalized autobiography. See "Author's Note to the Fourth Edition," A Search for America, n.p.

⁶Frye, CBC Symposium, 36-7, 42.

⁷Grove, "A Writer's Classification of Writers and Their Work," University of Toronto Quarterly, I (January, 1932), 247.

⁸Birbalsingh, "Grove and Existentialism," Canadian Literature, 43 (Winter, 1970), 68.

⁹Collin, "La Tragique Ironie de Frederick Philip Grove," Gants du Ciel, IV (Winter, 1946), 21.

¹⁰Grove, letter to Desmond Pacey, June 1, 1943.

¹¹Grove, "Apologic pro Vita et Opere Suo," Canadian Forum, XI (August, 1931), 421.

¹²Ibid., 421.

¹³Epigraph to Book III, A Search for America, 223.

¹⁴Thoreau's statement, "None can be an impartial or wise observer of human life but from the vantage ground of what we should call voluntary poverty," is the Epigraph to Book IV, A Search for America, 317.

¹⁵Twain, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, 245

Chapter IV

- ¹Mann, Tonio Kröger, 79.
- ²Grove, letter to Mr. W. [unidentified], May 10, 1914.
- ³Spettigue, Grove, 2.
- ⁴Phelps, CBC Symposium, 14.
- ⁵Grove, letter to W. B. Holliday, Dec. 11, 1940.
- ⁶Grove, letter to Watson Kirkconnell, Feb. 7, 1927.
- ⁷Grove, letter to Lorne Pierce, April 23, 1941.
- ⁸Ibid., May 5, 1941.
- ⁹Ibid., April 1, 1940.
- ¹⁰Ibid., May 30, 1940.
- ¹¹Ibid., April 25, 1941.
- ¹²Mrs. Grove, CBC Symposium, 20-21.
- ¹³Grove, letter to Raymond Knister, April 14, 1929.
- ¹⁴Grove, letter to Lorne Pierce, June 15, 1936.
- ¹⁵Grove, letter to Watson Kirkconnell, March 24, 1929.
- ¹⁶See Ayre, "Canadian Writers of Today: Frederick Philip Grove," Canadian Forum, XII (April, 1932), 255-257.
- ¹⁷Grove, "Letter to the Editor," Canadian Forum, XII (May, 1932), 319.
- ¹⁸Ibid., 319.
- ¹⁹Grove, letter to Lorne Pierce, Dec. 8, 1939.

Chapter V

- ¹Spettigue, Grove, 23.
- ²Ibid., 23.
- ³See Grove's correspondance with Kirkconnell and Crouch.

⁴Grove, letter to Watson Kirkconnell, Nov. 11, 1927.

⁵Grove, letter to Robert Crouch, Oct. 24, 1935.

⁶Grove, letter to Ray Stubbs, Dec. 19, 1940.

⁷Grove, "A Writer's Classification of Writers and Their Work," University of Toronto Quarterly, I (January, 1932), 240.

⁸Callaghan, CBC Symposium, 3.

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B30031